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The First and the Last

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John Galsworthy

Life calls the tune—we dance



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To
ANDRÉ CHEVRILLON

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THE FIRST AND THE LAST

•

“So the last shall be first, and the first last.”—**HOLY WRIT.**

It was a dark room at that hour of six in the evening, when just the single oil reading-lamp under its green shade let fall a dapple of light over the Turkey carpet ; over the covers of books taken out of the book-shelves, and the open pages of the one selected ; over the deep blue and gold of the coffee service on the little old stool with its Oriental embroidery. Very dark in the winter, with drawn curtains, many rows of leather-bound volumes, oak-panelled walls and ceiling. So large, too, that the lighted spot before the fire where he sat was just an oasis. But that was what Keith Darrant liked, after his day's work—the hard early morning study of his “cases,” the fret and strain of the day in court ; it was his rest, these two hours before dinner, with books, coffee, a pipe, and sometimes a nap. In red Turkish slippers and his old brown velvet coat, he was well suited to that framing of glow and darkness. A painter would have seized avidly on his clear-cut, yellowish face, with its black eyebrows twisting up over eyes—grey or brown, one could hardly tell, and its dark grizzling hair still plentiful, in spite of those daily hours of wig. He seldom thought of his work while he sat there, throwing off with practised ease the strain of that long attention to the multiple threads of argument and evidence to be disentangled—work profoundly interesting, as a rule, to his clear

intellect, trained to almost instinctive rejection of all but the essential, to selection of what was legally vital out of the mass of confused tactical and human detail presented to his scrutiny ; yet sometimes tedious and wearing. As for instance to-day, when he had suspected his client of perjury, and was almost convinced that he must throw up his brief. He had disliked the weak-looking, white-faced fellow from the first, and his nervous, shifty answers, his prominent startled eyes—a type too common in these days of canting tolerations and weak humanitarianism ; no good, no good !

Of the three books he had taken down, a volume of Voltaire—curious fascination that Frenchman had, for all his destructive irony!—a volume of Burton's travels, and Stevenson's "New Arabian Nights," he had pitched upon the last. He felt, that evening, the want of something sedative, a desire to rest from thought of any kind. The court had been crowded, stuffy ; the air, as he walked home, soft, sou'-westerly, charged with coming moisture, no quality of vigour in it ; he felt relaxed, tired, even nervy, and for once the loneliness of his house seemed strange and comfortless.

Lowering the lamp, he turned his face towards the fire. Perhaps he would get a sleep before that boring dinner at the Tellasson's. He wished it were vacation, and Maisie back from school. A widower for many years, he had lost the habit of a woman about him ; yet to-night he had a positive yearning for the society of his little daughter, with her quick ways, and bright, dark eyes. Curious what perpetual need of a woman some men had ! His brother Laurence—wasted—all through women—atrophy of will power ! A man on the edge of things ; living from hand to mouth ; his

gifts all down at heel ! One would have thought the Scottish strain might have saved him ; and yet, when a Scotsman did begin to go downhill, who could go faster ? Curious that their mother's blood should have worked so differently in her two sons. He himself had always felt he owed all his success to it.

His thoughts went off at a tangent to a certain issue troubling his legal conscience. He had not wavered in the usual assumption of omniscience, but he was by no means sure that he had given right advice. Well ! Without that power to decide and hold to decision in spite of misgiving, one would never have been fit for one's position at the Bar, never have been fit for anything. The longer he lived, the more certain he became of the prime necessity of virile and decisive action in all the affairs of life. A word and a blow—and the blow first ! Doubts, hesitations, sentiment—the muling and puking of this twilight age—— ! And there welled up on his handsome face a smile that was almost devilish—the tricks of firelight are so many ! It faded again in sheer drowsiness ; he slept. . . .

He woke with a start, having a feeling of something out beyond the light, and without turning his head said : “ What's that ? ” There came a sound as if somebody had caught his breath. He turned up the lamp.

“ Who's there ? ”

A voice over by the door answered :

“ Only I—Larry.”

Something in the tone, or perhaps just being startled out of sleep like this, made him shiver. He said :

“ I was asleep. Come in ! ”

It was noticeable that he did not get up, or even turn his head, now that he knew who it was, but waited,

his half-closed eyes fixed on the fire, for his brother to come forward. A visit from Laurence was not an unmixed blessing. He could hear him breathing, and became conscious of a scent of whisky. Why could not the fellow at least abstain when he was coming here! It was so childish, so lacking in any sense of proportion or of decency! And he said sharply:

"Well, Larry, what is it?"

It was always something. He often wondered at the strength of that sense of trusteeship, which kept him still tolerant of the troubles, amenable to the petitions of this brother of his; or was it just "blood" feeling, a Highland sense of loyalty to kith and kin; an old-time quality which judgment and half his instincts told him was weakness, but which, in spite of all, bound him to the distressful fellow? Was he drunk now, that he kept lurking out there by the door? And he said less sharply:

"Why don't you come and sit down?"

He was coming now, avoiding the light, skirting along the walls just beyond the radiance of the lamp, his feet and legs to the waist brightly lighted, but his face disintegrated in shadow, like the face of a dark ghost.

"Are you ill, man?"

Still no answer, save a shake of that head, and the passing up of a hand, out of the light, to the ghostly forehead under the dishevelled hair. The scent of whisky was stronger now; and Keith thought:

'He really is drunk. Nice thing for the new butler to see! If he can't behave——'

The figure against the wall heaved a sigh—so truly from an overburdened heart that Keith was conscious with a certain dismay of not having yet fathomed the

cause of this uncanny silence. He got up, and, back to the fire, said with a brutality born of nerves rather than design :

"What is it, man ? Have you committed a murder, that you stand there dumb as a fish ? "

For a second no answer at all, not even of breathing ; then, just the whisper :

"Yes."

The sense of unreality which so helps one at moments of disaster enabled Keith to say vigorously :

"By Jove ! You *have* been drinking ! "

But it passed at once into deadly apprehension.

"What do you mean ? Come here, where I can see you. What's the matter with you, Larry ? "

With a sudden lurch and dive, his brother left the shelter of the shadow, and sank into a chair in the circle of light. And another long, broken sigh escaped him.

"There's nothing the matter with me, Keith ! It's true ! "

Keith stepped quickly forward, and stared down into his brother's face ; and instantly he saw that it *was* true. No one could have simulated the look in those eyes—of horrified wonder, as if they would never again get on terms with the face to which they belonged. To see them squeezed the heart—only real misery could look like that. Then that sudden pity became angry bewilderment.

"What in God's name is this nonsense ? "

But it was significant that he lowered his voice ; went over to the door, too, to see if it were shut. Laurence had drawn his chair forward, huddling over the fire—a thin figure, a worn, high-cheekboned face with deep-sunk blue eyes, and wavy hair all ruffled,

a face that still had a certain beauty. Putting a hand on that lean shoulder, Keith said :

"Come, Larry ! Pull yourself together, and drop exaggeration."

"It's true, I tell you ; I've killed a man."

The noisy violence of that outburst acted like a *douche*. What was the fellow about—shouting out such words ! But suddenly Laurence lifted his hands and wrung them. The gesture was so utterly painful that it drew a quiver from Keith's face.

"Why did you come here," he said, "and tell *me* this ?"

Larry's face was really unearthly sometimes, such strange gleams passed up on to it !

"Whom else should I tell ? I came to know what I'm to do, Keith ? Give myself up, or what ?"

At that sudden introduction of the practical Keith felt his heart twitch. Was it then as real as all that ? But he said, very quietly :

"Just tell me—How did it come about, this—affair ?"

That question linked the dark, gruesome, fantastic nightmare on to actuality.

"When did it happen ?"

"Last night."

In Larry's face there was—there had always been—something childishly truthful. He would never stand a chance in court ! And Keith said :

"How ? Where ? You'd better tell me quietly from the beginning. Drink this coffee ; it'll clear your head."

Laurence took the little blue cup and drained it.

"Yes," he said. "It's like this, Keith. There's a girl I've known for some months now——"

Women! And Keith said between his teeth :
“ Well ? ”

“ Her father was a Pole who died over here when she was sixteen, and left her all alone. A man called Walenn, a mongrel American, living in the same house, married her, or pretended to—she’s very pretty, Keith—and left her with a baby six months old, and another coming. That one died, and she did nearly. Then she starved till another fellow took her on. She lived with him two years ; then Walenn turned up again, and made her go back to him. The brute used to beat her black and blue, all for nothing. Then he left her again. When I met her she’d lost her elder child, too, and was taking anybody who came along.”

He suddenly looked up into Keith’s face.

“ But I’ve never met a sweeter woman, nor a truer, that I swear. Woman ! She’s only twenty now ! When I went to her last night, that brute—that Walenn—had found her out again ; and when he came for me, swaggering and bullying—Look ! ”—he touched a dark mark on his forehead—“ I took his throat in my hands, and when I let go——”

“ Yes ? ”

“ Dead. I never knew till afterwards that she was hanging on to him behind.”

Again he made that gesture—wringing his hands.

In a hard dry voice Keith said :

“ What did you do then ? ”

“ We sat by—by—it a long time. Then I carried it on my back down the street, round a corner to an archway.”

“ How far ? ”

“ About fifty yards.”

“ Was anyone—did anyone see ? ”

"No."

"What time?"

"Three."

"And then?"

"Went back to her."

"Why—in Heaven's name?"

"She was lonely and afraid; so was I, Keith."

"Where is this place?"

"Forty-two, Borrow Street, Soho."

"And the archway?"

"Corner of Glove Lane."

"Good God! Why—I saw it in the paper!"

And seizing the journal that lay on his bureau, Keith read again that paragraph: "The body of a man was found this morning under an archway in Glove Lane, Soho. From marks about the throat grave suspicions of foul play are entertained. The body had apparently been robbed, and nothing was discovered leading to identification."

It was real earnest, then. Murder! His own brother! He faced round and said:

"You saw this in the paper, and dreamed it. Understand—you dreamed it!"

The wistful answer came:

"If only I had, Keith—if only I had!"

In his turn, Keith very nearly wrung his hands.

"Did you take anything from the—body?"

"This dropped while we were struggling."

It was an empty envelope with a South American post-mark addressed: "Patrick Walenn, Simon's Hotel, Farrier Street, London." Again with that twitching in his heart, Keith said:

"Put it in the fire."

Then suddenly he stooped to pluck it out. By that

command—he had—identified himself with this—this—— But he did not pluck it out. It blackened, writhed, and vanished. And once more he said :

“ What in God’s name made you come here and tell *me* ? ”

“ You know about these things. I didn’t mean to kill him. I love the girl. What shall I do, Keith ? ”

Simple ! How simple ! To ask what he was to do ! It was like Larry ! And he said :

“ You were not seen, you think ? ”

“ It’s a dark street. There was no one about.”

“ When did you leave this girl the second time ? ”

“ About seven o’clock.”

“ Where did you go ? ”

“ To my rooms.”

“ In Fitzroy Street ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Did anyone see you come in ? ”

“ No.”

“ What have you done since ? ”

“ Sat there.”

“ Not been out ? ”

“ No.”

“ Not seen the girl ? ”

“ No.”

“ You don’t know, then, what she’s done since ? ”

“ No.”

“ Would she give you away ? ”

“ Never.”

“ Would she give herself away—hysteria ? ”

“ No.”

“ Who knows of your relations with her ? ”

“ No one.”

“ No one ? ”

"I don't know who should, Keith."

"Did anyone see you going in last night, when you first went to her?"

"No. She lives on the ground floor. I've got keys."

"Give them to me. What else have you that connects you with her?"

"Nothing."

"In your rooms?"

"No."

"No photographs. No letters?"

"No."

"Be careful."

"Nothing."

"No one saw you going back to her the second time?"

"No."

"No one saw you leave her in the morning?"

"No."

"You were fortunate. Sit down again, man. I must think."

Think! Think out this accursed thing—so beyond all thought, and all belief. But he could not think. Not a coherent thought would come. And he began again:

"Was it his first reappearance with her?"

"Yes."

"She told you so?"

"Yes."

"How did he find out where she was?"

"I don't know."

"How drunk were you?"

"I was not drunk."

"How much had you drunk?"

"About two bottles of claret—nothing."

"You say you didn't mean to kill him?"

"No—God knows!"

"That's something. What made you choose the arch?"

"It was the first dark place."

"Did his face look as if he had been strangled?"

"Don't!"

"Did it?"

"Yes."

"Very disfigured?"

"Yes."

"Did you look to see if his clothes were marked?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Why not? My God! If you had done it——!"

"You say he was disfigured. Would he be recognisable?"

"I don't know."

"When she lived with him last—where was that?"

"I don't know for certain. Pimlico, I think."

"Not Soho?"

"No."

"How long has she been at the Soho place?"

"Nearly a year."

"Always the same rooms?"

"Yes."

"Is there anyone living in that house or street who would be likely to know her as his wife?"

"I don't think so."

"What was he?"

"I should think he was a professional 'bully.'"

"I see. Spending most of his time abroad, then?"

"Yes."

"Do you know if he was known to the police?"

"I haven't heard of it."

"Now, listen, Larry. When you leave here go straight home, and don't go out till I come to you, to-morrow morning. Promise that!"

"I promise."

"I've got a dinner engagement. I'll think this out. Don't drink. Don't talk! Pull yourself together."

"Don't keep me longer than you can help, Keith!"

That white face, those eyes, that shaking hand! With a twinge of pity in the midst of all the turbulence of his revolt, and fear, and disgust, Keith put his hand on his brother's shoulder, and said:

"Courage!"

And suddenly he thought: 'My God! Courage! I shall want it all myself!'

II

LAURENCE DARRANT, leaving his brother's house in the Adelphi, walked northwards, rapidly, slowly, rapidly again. For, if there are men who by force of will do one thing only at a time, there are men who from lack of will do now one thing, now another, with equal intensity. To such natures, to be gripped by the Nemesis which attends the lack of self-control is no reason for being more self-controlled. Rather does it foster their pet feeling: "What matter? To-morrow we die!" The effort of will required to go to Keith had relieved, exhausted and exasperated him. In accordance with those three feelings was the progress of his walk. He started from the door with the fixed resolve to go home and stay there quietly till Keith

came. He was in Keith's hands, Keith would know what was to be done. But he had not gone three hundred yards before he felt so utterly weary, body and soul, that if he had but had a pistol in his pocket he would have shot himself in the street. Not even the thought of the girl—this young unfortunate with her strange devotion, who had kept him straight these last five months, who had roused in him a depth of feeling he had never known before—would have availed against that sudden black dejection. Why go on—a waif at the mercy of his own nature, a straw blown here and there by every gust which rose in him? Why not have done with it for ever, and take it out in sleep?

He was approaching the fatal street, where he and the girl, that early morning, had spent the hours clutched together, trying in the refuge of love to forget for a moment their horror and fear. Should he go in? He had promised Keith not to. Why had he promised? He caught sight of himself in a chemist's lighted window. Miserable, shadowy brute! And he remembered suddenly a dog he had picked up once in the streets of Pera, a black-and-white creature—different to the other dogs, not one of their breed, a pariah of pariahs, who had strayed there somehow. He had taken it home to the house where he was staying, contrary to all custom of the country; had got fond of it; had shot it himself, sooner than leave it behind again to the mercies of its own kind in the streets. Twelve years ago! And those sleeve-links made of little Turkish coins he had brought back for the girl at the hairdresser's in Chancery Lane where he used to get shaved—pretty creature, like a wild rose. He had asked of her a kiss for payment. What queer

emotion when she put her face forward to his lips—a sort of passionate tenderness and shame, at the softness and warmth of that flushed cheek, at her beauty and trustful gratitude. She would soon have given herself to him—that one! He had never gone there again! And to this day he did not know why he had abstained; to this day did not know whether he were glad or sorry not to have plucked that rose. He must surely have been very different then! Queer business, life—queer, queer business!—to go through it never knowing what you would do next. Ah! to be like Keith, steady, buttoned-up in success; a brass pot, a pillar of society! Once, as a boy, he had been within an ace of killing Keith, for sneering at him. Once in Southern Italy he had been near killing a driver who was flogging his horse. And now, that dark-faced, swinish bully who had ruined the girl he had grown to love—he had done it! Killed him! Killed a man!

He who did not want to hurt a fly. The chemist's window comforted him with the sudden thought that he had at home that which made him safe, in case they should arrest him. He would never again go out without some of those little white tablets sewn into the lining of his coat. Restful, even exhilarating thought! They said a man should not take his own life. Let *them* taste horror—those glib citizens! Let *them* live as that girl had lived, as millions lived all the world over, under their canting dogmas! A man might rather even take his life than watch their cursed inhumanities.

He went into the chemist's for a bromide; and, while the man was mixing it, stood resting one foot like a tired horse. The "life" he had squeezed out of that fellow! After all, a billion living creatures

gave up life each day, had it squeezed out of them, mostly. And perhaps not one a day deserved death so much as that loathly fellow. Life! a breath—a flame! Nothing! Why, then, this icy clutching at his heart?

The chemist brought the draught.

“Not sleeping, sir?”

“No.”

The man’s eyes seemed to say: “Yes! Burning the candle at both ends—I know!” Odd life, a chemist’s; pills and powders all day long, to hold the machinery of men together! Devilish odd trade!

In going out he caught the reflection of his face in a mirror; it seemed too good altogether for a man who had committed murder. There was a sort of brightness underneath, an amiability lurking about its shadows; how—how could it be the face of a man who had done what he had done? His head felt lighter now, his feet lighter; he walked rapidly again.

Curious feeling of relief and oppression all at once! Frightful—to long for company, for talk, for distraction; and—to be afraid of it! The girl—the girl and Keith were now the only persons who would not give him that feeling of dread. And, of those two—Keith was not——! Who could consort with one who was never wrong, a successful, righteous fellow; a chap built so that he knew nothing about himself, wanted to know nothing, a chap all solid actions. To be a quicksand swallowing up one’s own resolutions was bad enough! But to be like Keith—all will-power, marching along, treading down his own feelings and weaknesses!—No! One could not make a comrade of a man like Keith, even if he were one’s brother? The only creature in all the world was the girl. She

alone knew and felt what he was feeling ; would put up with him and love him whatever he did, or was done to him. He stopped and took shelter in a doorway, to light a cigarette.

He had suddenly a fearful wish to pass the archway where he had placed the body ; a fearful wish that had no sense, no end in view, no anything ; just an insensate craving to see the dark place again. He crossed Borrow Street to the little lane. There was only one person visible, a man on the far side with his shoulders hunched against the wind ; a short, dark figure which crossed and came towards him in the flickering lamp-light. What a face ! Yellow, ravaged, clothed almost to the eyes in a stubbly greyish growth of beard, with blackish teeth, and haunting bloodshot eyes. And what a figure of rags—one shoulder higher than the other, one leg a little lame, and thin ! A surge of feeling came up in Laurence for this creature, more unfortunate than himself. There were lower depths than his !

“ Well, brother,” he said, “ *you* don’t look too prosperous ! ”

The smile which gleamed out on the man’s face seemed as unlikely as a smile on a scarecrow.

“ Prosperity doesn’t come my way,” he said in a rusty voice. “ I’m a failure—always been a failure. And yet—you wouldn’t think it, would you ?—I was a minister of religion once.”

Laurence held out a shilling. But the man shook his head.

“ Keep your money,” he said. “ I’ve got more than you to-day, I daresay. But thank you for taking a little interest. That’s worth more than money to a man that’s down.”

“ You’re right.”

"Yes," the rusty voice went on ; " I'd as soon die as go on living as I do. And now I've lost my self-respect. Often wondered how long a starving man could go without losing his self-respect. Not so very long. You take my word for that." And without the slightest change in the monotony of that creaking voice he added :

" Did you read of the murder ? Just here. I've been looking at the place."

The words : " So have I ! " leaped up to Laurence's lips ; he choked them down with a sort of terror.

" I wish you better luck," he said. " Good-night ! " and hurried away. A sort of ghastly laughter was forcing its way up in his throat. Was everyone talking of the murder he had committed ? Even the very scarecrows ?

III

THERE are some natures so constituted that, due to be hung at ten o'clock, they will play chess at eight. Such men invariably rise. They make especially good bishops, editors, judges, impresarios, Prime ministers, money-lenders, and generals ; in fact, fill with exceptional credit any position of power over their fellow-men. They have spiritual cold storage, in which are preserved their nervous systems. In such men there is little or none of that fluid sense and continuity of feeling known under those vague terms, speculation, poetry, philosophy. Men of facts and of decision switching imagination on and off at will, subordinating sentiment to reason . . . one does not think of them when watching wind ripple over cornfields, or swallows flying.

Keith Darrant had need for being of that breed during his dinner at the Tellassons. It was just eleven when he issued from the big house in Portland Place and refrained from taking a cab. He wanted to walk that he might better think. What crude and wanton irony there was in his situation! To have been made father-confessor of a murderer, he—well on towards a judgeship! With his contempt for the kind of weakness which landed men in such abysses, he felt it all so sordid, so “impossible,” that he could hardly bring his mind to bear on it at all. And yet he must, because of two powerful instincts—self-preservation and blood-loyalty.

The wind had still the sapping softness of the afternoon, but rain had held off so far. It was warm, and he unbuttoned his fur overcoat. The nature of his thoughts deepened the dark austerity of his face, whose thin, well-cut lips were always pressing together, as if, by meeting, to dispose of each thought as it came up. He moved along the crowded pavements glumly. That air of festive conspiracy which drops with the darkness on to lighted streets, galled him. He turned off on a darker route.

This ghastly business! Convinced of its reality, he yet could not see it. The thing existed in his mind, not as a picture, but as a piece of irrefutable evidence. Larry had not meant to do it, of course. But it was murder, all the same. Men like Larry—weak, impulsive, sentimental, introspective creatures—did they ever mean what they did? This man, this Walenn, was, by all accounts, better dead than alive; no need to waste a thought on him! But, crime—the ugliness—Justice unsatisfied! Crime concealed—and his own share in the concealment! And yet—brother to

brother ! Surely no one could demand action from him ! It was only a question of what he was going to advise Larry to do. To keep silent, and disappear ? Had that a chance of success ? Perhaps—if the answers to his questions had been correct. But this girl ! Suppose the dead man's relationship to her were ferreted out, could she be relied on not to endanger Larry ? These women were all the same, unstable as water, emotional, shiftless—pests of society. Then, too, a crime untracked, dogging all his brother's after life ; a secret following him wherever he might vanish to ; hanging over him, watching for some drunken moment, to slip out of his lips. It was bad to think of. A clean breast of it ? But his heart twitched within him. " Brother of Mr. Keith Darrant, the well-known King's Counsel "—visiting a woman of the town, strangling with his bare hands the woman's husband ! No intention to murder, but—a dead man ! A dead man carried out of the house, laid under a dark archway ! Provocation ! Recommended to mercy—penal servitude for life ! Was that the advice he was going to give Larry to-morrow morning ?

And he had a sudden vision of shaven men with clay-coloured features, run, as it were, to seed, as he had seen them once in Pentonville, when he had gone there to visit a prisoner. Larry ! Whom, as a baby creature, he had watched straddling ; whom, as a little fellow, he had fagged ; whom he had seen through scrapes at college ; to whom he had lent money time and again, and time and again admonished in his courses. Larry ! Five years younger than himself ; and committed to his charge by their mother when she died. To become for life one of those men with faces like diseased plants ; with no hair but a bushy

stubble ; with arrows marked on their yellow clothes ! Larry ! One of those men herded like sheep ; at the beck and call of common men ! A gentleman, his own brother, to live that slave's life, to be ordered here and there, year after year, day in, day out. Something snapped within him. He could not give that advice. Impossible ! But if not, he must make sure of his ground, must verify, must know. This Glove Lane—this archway ? It would not be far from where he was that very moment. He looked for someone of whom to make enquiry. A policeman was standing at the corner, his stolid face illumined by a lamp ; capable and watchful—an excellent officer, no doubt ; but, turning his head away, Keith passed him without a word. Strange to feel that cold, uneasy feeling in presence of the law ! A grim little driving home of what it all meant ! Then, suddenly, he saw that the turning to his left was Borrow Street itself. He walked up one side, crossed over, and returned. He passed Number Forty-two, a small house with business names printed on the lifeless windows of the first and second floors ; with dark curtained windows on the ground floor, or was there just a slink of light in one corner ? Which way had Larry turned ? Which way under that grisly burden ? Fifty paces of this squalid street—narrow, and dark, and empty, thank heaven ! Glove Lane ! Here it was ! A tiny runlet of a street. And here—— ! He had run right on to the arch, a brick bridge connecting two portions of a warehouse, and dark indeed. “ That's right, gov'nor ! That's the place ! ” He needed all his self-control to turn leisurely to the speaker. “ 'Ere's where they found the body—very spot—leanin' up 'ere. They ain't got 'im yet. Lytest—me lord ! ”

It was a ragged boy holding out a tattered yellowish journal. His lynx eyes peered up from under lanky wisps of hair, and his voice had the proprietary note of one making "a corner" in his news. Keith took the paper and gave him twopence. He even found a sort of comfort in the young ghoul's hanging about there; it meant that others besides himself had come morbidly to look. By the dim lamplight he read: "Glove Lane garrotting mystery. Nothing has yet been discovered of the murdered man's identity; from the cut of his clothes he is supposed to be a foreigner." The boy had vanished, and Keith saw the figure of a policeman coming slowly down this gutter of a street. A second's hesitation, and he stood firm. Nothing obviously could have brought him here save this "mystery," and he stayed quietly staring at the arch. The policeman moved up abreast. Keith saw that he was the one whom he had passed just now. He noted the cold offensive question die out of the man's eyes when they caught the gleam of white shirt-front under the opened fur collar. And holding up the paper, he said:

"Is this where the man was found?"

"Yes, sir."

"Still a mystery, I see?"

"Well, we can't always go by the papers. But I don't fancy they do know much about it, yet."

"Dark spot. Do fellows sleep under here?"

The policeman nodded. "There's not an arch in London where we don't get 'em sometimes."

"Nothing found on him—I think I read?"

"Not a copper. Pockets inside out. There's some funny characters about this quarter. Greeks, Hitalians—all sorts."

Queer sensation this, of being glad of a policeman's confidential tone !

" Well, good-night ! "

" Good-night, sir. Good-night ! "

He looked back from Borrow Street. The policeman was still standing there holding up his lantern, so that its light fell into the archway, as if trying to read its secret.

Now that he had seen this dark, deserted spot, the chances seemed to him much better. " Pockets inside out ! " Either Larry had had presence of mind to do a very clever thing, or someone had been at the body before the police found it. That was the more likely. A dead backwater of a place ! At three o'clock—loneliest of all hours—Larry's five minutes' grim excursion to and fro might well have passed unseen ! Now, it all depended on the girl ; on whether Laurence had been seen coming to her or going away ; on whether, if the man's relationship to her were discovered, she could be relied on to say nothing. There was not a soul in Borrow Street now ; hardly even a lighted window ; and he took one of those rather desperate decisions only possible to men daily accustomed to the instant taking of responsibility. He would go to her, and see for himself. He came to the door of Forty-two, obviously one of those which are only shut at night, and tried the larger key. It fitted, and he was in a gas-lighted passage, with an oil-clothed floor, and a single door to his left. He stood there undecided. She must be made to understand that he knew everything. She must not be told more than that he was a friend of Larry's. She must not be frightened, yet must be forced to give her very soul away. A hostile witness—not to be treated as hostile—

a matter for delicate handling ! But his knock was not answered.

Should he give up this nerve-racking, bizarre effort to come at a basis of judgment ; go away, and just tell Laurence that he could not advise him ? And then—what ? Something *must* be done. He knocked again. Still no answer. And with that impatience of being thwarted, natural to him, and fostered to the full by the conditions of his life, he tried the other key. It worked, and he opened the door. Inside all was dark, but a voice from some way off, with a sort of breathless relief in its foreign tones, said :

“ Oh ! then it’s you, Larry ! Why did you knock ? I was so frightened. Turn up the light, dear. Come in ! ”

Feeling by the door for a switch in the pitch blackness he was conscious of arms round his neck, a warm thinly clad body pressed to his own ; then withdrawn as quickly, with a gasp, and the most awful terror-stricken whisper :

“ Oh ! Who is it ? ”

With a glacial shiver down his own spine, Keith answered :

“ A friend of Laurence. Don’t be frightened ! ”

There was such silence that he could hear a clock ticking, and the sound of his own hand passing over the surface of the wall, trying to find the switch. He found it, and in the light which leaped up he saw, stiffened against a dark curtain evidently screening off a bedroom, a girl standing, holding a long black coat together at her throat, so that her face with its pale brown hair, short and square-cut and curling up underneath, had an uncanny look of being detached from any body. Her face was so alabaster pale that the staring, startled eyes, dark blue or brown, and the

faint rose of the parted lips, were like colour stainings on a white mask ; and it had a strange delicacy, truth, and pathos, such as only suffering brings. Though not susceptible to æsthetic emotion, Keith was curiously affected. He said gently :

“ You needn’t be afraid. I haven’t come to do you harm—quite the contrary. May I sit down and talk ? ” And, holding up the keys, he added : “ Laurence wouldn’t have given me these, would he, if he hadn’t trusted me ? ”

Still she did not move, and he had the impression that he was looking at a spirit—a spirit startled out of its flesh. Nor at the moment did it seem in the least strange that he should conceive such an odd thought. He stared round the room—clean and tawdry, with its tarnished gilt mirror, marble-topped side-table, and plush-covered sofa. Twenty years and more since he had been in such a place. And he said :

“ Won’t you sit down ? I’m sorry to have startled you.”

But still she did not move, whispering :

“ Who are you, please ? ”

And, moved suddenly beyond the realm of caution by the terror in that whisper, he answered :

“ Larry’s brother.”

She uttered a little sigh of relief which went to Keith’s heart, and, still holding the dark coat together at her throat, came forward and sat down on the sofa. He could see that her feet, thrust into slippers, were bare ; with her short hair, and those candid startled eyes, she looked like a tall child. He drew up a chair and said :

“ You must forgive me coming at such an hour ; he’s told me, you see.”

He expected her to flinch and gasp; but she only clasped her hands together on her knees, and said :

" Yes ? "

Then horror and discomfort rose up in him, afresh.

" An awful business ! "

Her whisper echoed him :

" Yes, oh ! yes ! Awful—it is awful ! "

And suddenly realising that the man must have fallen dead just where he was sitting, Keith became stock silent, staring at the floor.

" Yes," she whispered ; " just there. I see him now always falling ! "

How she said that ! With what a strange gentle despair ! In this girl of evil life, who had brought on them this tragedy, what was it which moved him to a sort of unwilling compassion ?

" You look very young," he said.

" I am twenty."

" And you are fond of—my brother ? "

" I would die for him."

Impossible to mistake the tone of her voice, or the look in her eyes, true deep Slav eyes ; dark brown, not blue as he had thought at first. It was a very pretty face—either her life had not eaten into it yet, or the suffering of these last hours had purged away those marks ; or perhaps this devotion of hers to Larry. He felt strangely at sea, sitting there with this child of twenty ; he, over forty, a man of the world, professionally used to every side of human nature. But he said, stammering a little :

" I—I have come to see how far you can save him. Listen, and just answer the questions I put to you."

She raised her hands, squeezed them together, and murmured :

" Oh ! I will answer anything."

" This man, then—your—your husband—was he a bad man ? "

" A dreadful man."

" Before he came here last night, how long since you saw him ? "

" Eighteen months."

" Where did you live when you saw him last ? "

" In Pimlico."

" Does anybody about here know you as Mrs. Walenn ? "

" No. When I came here, after my little girl died, I came to live a bad life. Nobody knows me at all. I am quite alone."

" If they discover who he was, they will look for his wife ? "

" I do not know. He did not let people think I was married to him. I was very young ; he treated many, I think, like me."

" Do you think he was known to the police ? "

She shook her head. " He was very clever."

" What is your name now ? "

" Wanda Livinska."

" Were you known by that name before you were married ? "

" Wanda is my Christian name. Livinska—I just call myself."

" I see ; since you came here."

" Yes."

" Did my brother ever see this man before last night ? "

" Never."

" You had told him about his treatment of you ? "

" Yes. And that man first went for him."

" I saw the mark. Do you think anyone saw my brother come to you ? "

" I do not know. He says not."

" Can you tell if anyone saw him carrying the—the thing away ? "

" No one in this street—I was looking."

" Nor coming back ? "

" No one."

" Nor going out in the morning ? "

" I do not think it."

" Have you a servant ? "

" Only a woman who comes at nine in the morning for an hour."

" Does she know Larry ? "

" No."

" Friends, acquaintances ? "

" No ; I am very quiet. And since I knew your brother, I see no one. Nobody comes here but him for a long time now."

" How long ? "

" Five months."

" Have you been out to-day ? "

" No."

" What have you been doing ? "

" Crying."

It was said with a certain dreadful simplicity, and pressing her hands together, she went on :

" He is in danger, because of me. I am so afraid for him."

Holding up his hand to check that emotion, he said :

" Look at me ! "

She fixed those dark eyes on him, and in her bare throat, from which the coat had fallen back, he could see her resolutely swallowing down her agitation.

"If the worst comes to the worst, and this man is traced to you, can you trust yourself not to give my brother away?"

Her eyes shone. She got up and went to the fireplace:

"Look! I have burned all the things he has given me—even his picture. Now I have nothing from him."

Keith, too, got up.

"Good! One more question: Do the police know you, because—because of your life?"

She shook her head, looking at him intently, with those mournfully true eyes. And he felt a sort of shame.

"I was obliged to ask. Do you know where he lives?"

"Yes."

"You must not go there. And he must not come to you, here."

Her lips quivered; but she bowed her head. Suddenly he found her quite close to him, speaking almost in a whisper:

"Please do not take him from me altogether. I will be so careful. I will not do anything to hurt him; but if I cannot see him sometimes, I shall die. Please do not take him from me." And catching his hand between her own, she pressed it desperately. It was several seconds before Keith said:

"Leave that to me. I will see him. I shall arrange. You must leave that to me."

"But you will be kind?"

He felt her lips kissing his hand. And the soft moist touch sent a queer feeling through him, protective, yet just a little brutal, having in it a shiver of sensuality. He withdrew his hand. And as if warned that she had been too pressing, she recoiled humbly. But suddenly she turned, and stood absolutely rigid; then almost inaudibly whispered: "Listen! Someone out—out there!" And darting past him she turned out the light.

Almost at once came a knock on the door. He could feel—actually feel the terror of this girl beside him in the dark. And he, too, felt terror. Who could it be? No one came but Larry, she had said. Who else then could it be? Again came the knock, louder! He felt the breath of her whisper on his cheek: "If it is Larry! I must open." He shrank back against the wall; heard her open the door and say faintly: "Yes. Please! Who?"

Light painted a thin moving line on the wall opposite, and a voice which Keith recognised answered:

"All right, miss. Your outer door's open here. You ought to keep it shut after dark."

God! That policeman! And it had been his own doing, not shutting the outer door behind him when he came in. He heard her say timidly in her foreign voice: "Thank you, sir!" the policeman's retreating steps, the outer door being shut, and felt her close to him again. That something in her youth and strange prettiness which had touched and kept him gentle, no longer blunted the edge of his exasperation, now that he could not see her. They were all the same, these women; could not speak the truth! And he said brusquely:

"You told me they didn't know you!"

Her voice answered like a sigh :

"I did not think they did, sir. It is so long I was not out in the town, not since I had Larry."

The repulsion which all the time seethed deep in Keith welled up at those words. His brother—son of *his* mother, a gentleman—the property of this girl, bound to her, body and soul, by this unspeakable event ! But she had turned up the light. Had she some intuition that darkness was against *her* ? Yes, she *was* pretty with that soft face, colourless save for its lips and dark eyes, with that face somehow so touchingly, so unaccountably good, and like a child's.

"I am going now," he said. "Remember ! He mustn't come here ; you mustn't go to him. I shall see him to-morrow. If you are as fond of him as you say—take care, take care !"

She sighed out, "Yes ! oh, yes !" and Keith went to the door. She was standing with her back to the wall, and to follow him she only moved her head—that dove-like face with all its life in eyes which seemed saying : "Look into us ; nothing we hide ; all—all is there !"

And he went out.

In the passage he paused before opening the outer door. He did not want to meet that policeman again ; the fellow's round should have taken him well out of the street by now, and turning the handle cautiously, he looked out. No one in sight. He stood a moment, wondering if he should turn to right or left, then briskly crossed the street. A voice to his right hand said :

"Good-night, sir."

There in the shadow of a doorway the policeman was standing. The fellow must have seen him coming

out ! Utterly unable to restrain a start, and muttering " Good-night ! " Keith walked on rapidly.

He went full quarter of a mile before he lost that startled and uneasy feeling in sardonic exasperation that he, Keith Darrant, had been taken for a frequenter of a lady of the town. The whole thing—the whole thing !—a vile and disgusting business ! His very mind felt dirty, and breathless ; his spirit, drawn out of sheath, had slowly to slide back before he could at all focus and readjust his reasoning faculty. Certainly, he had got the knowledge he wanted. There was less danger than he thought. That girl's eyes ! No mistaking her devotion. She would not give Larry away. Yes ! Larry must clear out—South America—the East—it did not matter. But he felt no relief. The cheap, tawdry room had wrapped itself round his fancy with its atmosphere of murky love, with the feeling it inspired, of emotion caged within those yellowish walls and the red stuff of its furniture. That girl's face ! Devotion ; truth, too, and beauty, rare and moving, in its setting of darkness and horror, in that nest of vice and of disorder ! . . . The dark archway ; the street arab, with his gleeful : " They 'ain't got 'im yet ! " ; the feel of those bare arms round his neck ; that whisper of horror in the darkness ; above all, again, again, her child face looking into his, so truthful ! And suddenly he stood quite still in the street. What in God's name was he about ? What grotesque juggling amongst shadows, what strange and ghastly eccentricity was all this ? The forces of order and routine, all the actualities of his daily life, marched on him at that moment, and swept everything before them. It was a dream, a nightmare—not real ! It was ridiculous ! That he—he

should thus be bound up with things so black and bizarre !

He had come by now to the Strand, that street down which every day he moved to the Law Courts, to his daily work ; his work so dignified and regular, so irreproachable, and solid. No ! The thing was all a monstrous nightmare ! It would go, if he fixed his mind on the familiar objects around, read the names on the shops, looked at the faces passing. Far down the thoroughfare he caught the outline of the old church, and beyond, the loom of the Law Courts themselves. The bell of a fire-engine sounded, and the horses came galloping by, with the shining metal, rattle of hoofs and hoarse shouting. Here was a sensation, real and harmless, dignified and customary ! A woman flaunting round the corner looked up at him, and leered out : " Good-night ! " Even that was customary, tolerable. Two policemen passed, supporting between them a man the worse for liquor, full of fight and expletives ; the sight was soothing, an ordinary thing which brought passing annoyance, interest, disgust. It had begun to rain ; he felt it on his face with pleasure—an actual thing, not eccentric, a thing which happened every day !

He began to cross the street. Cabs were going at furious speed now that the last omnibus had ceased to run ; it distracted him to take this actual, ordinary risk run so often every day. During that crossing of the Strand, with the rain in his face and the cabs shooting past, he regained for the first time his assurance, shook off this unreal sense of being in the grip of something, and walked resolutely to the corner of his home turning. But passing into that darker stretch, he again stood still. A policeman had also turned into

that street on the other side. Not—surely not——! Absurd! They were all alike to look at—those fellows! Absurd! He walked on sharply, and let himself into his house. But on his way upstairs he could not for the life of him help raising a corner of a curtain and looking from the staircase window. The policeman was marching solemnly, about twenty-five yards away, paying apparently no attention to anything whatever.

IV

KEITH woke at five o'clock, his usual hour, without remembrance. But the grisly shadow started up when he entered his study, where the lamp burned, and the fire shone, and the coffee was set ready, just as when yesterday afternoon Larry had stood out there against the wall. For a moment he fought against realisation; then, drinking off his coffee, sat down sullenly at the bureau to his customary three hours' study of the day's cases.

Not one word of his brief could he take in. It was all jumbled with murky images and apprehensions, and for full half an hour he suffered mental paralysis. Then the sheer necessity of knowing something of the case which he had to open at half-past ten that morning forced him to a concentration which never quite subdued the *malaise* at the bottom of his heart. Nevertheless, when he rose at half-past eight and went into the bathroom, he had earned his grim satisfaction in this victory of will-power. By half-past nine he must be at Larry's. A boat left London for the Argentine to-morrow. If Larry was to get away at once, money

must be arranged for. And then at breakfast he came on this paragraph in the paper :

“ SOHO MURDER.

“ Enquiry late last night established the fact that the Police have discovered the identity of the man found strangled yesterday morning under an archway in Glove Lane. An arrest has been made.”

By good fortune he had finished eating, for the words made him feel physically sick. At this very minute Larry might be locked up, waiting to be charged—might even have been arrested before his own visit to the girl last night. If Larry were arrested, she must be implicated. What, then, would be his own position? Idiot to go and look at that archway, to go and see the girl! Had that policeman really followed him home? Accessory after the fact! Keith Darrant, King's Counsel, man of mark! He forced himself by an effort, which had something of the heroic, to drop this panicky feeling. Panic never did good. He must face it, and see. He refused even to hurry, calmly collected the papers wanted for the day, and attended to a letter or two, before he set out in a taxi-cab to Fitzroy Street.

Waiting outside there in the grey morning for his ring to be answered, he looked the very picture of a man who knew his mind, a man of resolution. But it needed all his will-power to ask without tremor: “ Mr. Darrant in ? ” to hear without sign of any kind the answer: “ He's not up yet, sir.”

“ Never mind ; I'll go in and see him. Mr. Keith Darrant.”

On his way to Laurence's bedroom, in the midst of

utter relief, he had the self-possession to think : ‘ This arrest is the best thing that could have happened. It’ll keep their noses on a wrong scent till Larry’s got away. The girl must be sent off too, but not with him.’ Panic had ended in quite hardening his resolution. He entered the bedroom with a feeling of disgust. The fellow was lying there, his bare arms crossed behind his tousled head, staring at the ceiling, and smoking one of many cigarettes whose ends littered a chair beside him, whose sickly reek tainted the air. That pale face, with its jutting cheek-bones and chin, its hollow cheeks and blue eyes far sunk back—what a wreck of goodness !

He looked up at Keith through the haze of smoke and said quietly : “ Well, brother, what’s the sentence ? ‘ Transportation for life, and then to be fined forty pounds ? ’ ”

The flippancy revolted Keith. It was Larry all over ! Last night horrified and humble, this morning, “ Don’t care ” and feather-headed. He said sourly :

“ Oh ! You can joke about it now ? ”

Laurence turned his face to the wall.

“ Must.”

Fatalism ! How detestable were natures like that !

“ I’ve been to see her,” he said.

“ You ? ”

“ Last night. She can be trusted.”

Laurence laughed.

“ That I told you.”

“ I had to see for myself. You must clear out at once, Larry. She can come out to you by the next boat ; but you can’t go together. Have you any money ? ”

“ No.”

“ I can foot your expenses, and lend you a year’s

income in advance. But it must be a clean cut ; after you get out there your whereabouts must only be known to me."

A long sigh answered him.

"You're very good to me, Keith ; you've always been very good. I don't know why."

Keith answered drily :

"Nor I. There's a boat to the Argentine to-morrow. You're in luck ; they've made an arrest. It's in the paper."

"What ? "

The cigarette end dropped, the thin pyjama'd figure writhed up and stood clutching at the bed-rail.

"What ? "

The disturbing thought flitted through Keith's brain : 'I was a fool. He takes it queerly ; what now ? '

Laurence passed his hand over his forehead, and sat down on the bed.

"I hadn't thought of that," he said : "It does me ! "

Keith stared. In his relief that the arrested man was not Laurence, this had not occurred to him. What folly !

"Why ? " he said quickly ; "an innocent man's in no danger. They always get the wrong man first. It's a piece of luck, that's all. It gives us time."

How often had he not seen that expression on Larry's face, wistful, questioning, as if trying to see the thing with his—Keith's—eyes, trying to submit to better judgment ? And he said, almost gently :

"Now, look here, Larry ; this is too serious to trifle with. Don't worry about that. Leave it to me. Just get ready to be off. I'll take your berth and make arrangements. Here's some money for kit.

I can come round between five and six, and let you know. Pull yourself together, man. As soon as the girl's joined you out there, you'd better get across to Chile, the further the better. You must simply lose yourself. I must go now, if I'm to get to the Bank before I go down to the courts." And looking very steadily at his brother, he added :

"Come ! You've got to think of me in this matter as well as of yourself. No playing fast and loose with the arrangements. Understand ? "

But still Larry gazed up at him with that wistful questioning, and not till he had repeated, "Understand ? " did he receive "Yes" for answer.

Driving away, he thought : ' Queer fellow ! I don't know him, shall never know him ! ' and at once began to concentrate on the practical arrangements. At his bank he drew out £400 ; but waiting for the notes to be counted he suffered qualms. A clumsy way of doing things ! If there had been more time ! The thought : ' Accessory after the fact ! ' now infected everything. Notes were traceable. No other way of getting him away at once, though. One must take lesser risks to avoid greater. From the bank he drove to the office of the steamship line. He had told Larry he would book his passage. But that would not do ! He must only ask anonymously if there were accommodation. Having discovered that there were vacant berths, he drove on to the Law Courts. If he could have taken a morning off, he would have gone down to the police court and seen them charge this man. But even that was not too safe, with a face so well known as his. What would come of this arrest ? Nothing, surely ! The police always took somebody up, to keep the public quiet. Then, suddenly, he had

again the feeling that it was all a nightmare ; Larry had never done it ; the police had got the right man ! But instantly the memory of the girl's awe-stricken face, her figure huddling on the sofa, her words : " I see him always falling ! " came back. God ! What a business !

He felt he had never been more clear-headed and forcible than that morning in court. When he came out for lunch he bought the most sensational of the evening papers. But it was yet too early for news, and he had to go back into court no whit wiser concerning the arrest. When at last he threw off wig and gown, and had got through a conference and other necessary work, he went out to Chancery Lane, buying a paper on the way. Then he hailed a cab, and drove once more to Fitzroy Street.

V

LAURENCE had remained sitting on his bed for many minutes. An innocent man in no danger ! Keith had said it—the celebrated lawyer ! Could he rely on that ? Go out 8,000 miles, he and the girl, and leave a fellow-creature perhaps in mortal peril for an act committed by himself ?

In the past night he had touched bottom, as he thought ; become ready to face anything. When Keith came in he would without murmur have accepted the advice : " Give yourself up ! " He was prepared to pitch away the end of his life as he pitched from him the fag-ends of his cigarettes. And the long sigh he had heaved, hearing of reprieve, had been only half relief. Then, with incredible swiftness there had

rushed through him a feeling of unutterable joy and hope. Clean away—into a new country, a new life! The girl and he! Out there he wouldn't care, would rejoice even to have squashed the life out of such a noisome beetle of a man. Out there! Under a new sun, where blood ran quicker than in this foggy land, and people took justice into their own hands. For it had been justice on that brute even though he had not meant to kill him. And then to hear of this arrest! They would be charging the man to-day. He could go and see the poor creature accused of the murder he himself had committed! And he laughed. Go and see how likely it was that they might hang a fellow-man in place of himself? He dressed, but too shaky to shave himself, went out to a barber's shop. While there he read the news which Keith had seen. In this paper the name of the arrested man was given: "John Evan, no address." To be brought up on the charge at Bow Street. Yes! He must go! Once, twice, three times he walked past the entrance of the court before at last he entered and screwed himself away among the tag and bobtail.

The court was crowded; and from the murmurs round he could tell that it was his particular case which had brought so many there. In a dazed way he watched charge after charge disposed of with lightning quickness. But were they never going to reach his business? And then suddenly he saw the little scarecrow man of last night advancing to the dock between two policemen, more ragged and miserable than ever by light of day, like some shaggy, wan, grey animal, surrounded by sleek hounds.

A sort of satisfied purr was rising all round; and with horror Laurence perceived that *this—this* was

the man accused of what he himself had done—this queer, battered unfortunate to whom he had shown a passing friendliness. Then all feeling merged in the appalling interest of listening. The evidence was very short. Testimony of the hotel-keeper where Walenn had been staying, identifying his body, and a snake-shaped ring he had been wearing at dinner that evening. Testimony of a pawnbroker, that this same ring was pawned with him the first thing yesterday morning by the prisoner. Testimony of a policeman that he had noticed the man Evan several times in Glove Lane, and twice moved him on from sleeping under that arch. Testimony of another policeman that, when arrested at midnight, Evan had said: "Yes; I took the ring off his finger. I found him there dead. . . . I know I oughtn't to have done it. . . . I'm an educated man; it was stupid to pawn the ring. I found him with his pockets turned inside out."

Fascinating and terrible to sit staring at the man in whose place he should have been; to wonder when those small bright-grey bloodshot eyes would spy him out, and how he would meet that glance. Like a baited raccoon the little man stood, screwed back into a corner, mournful, cynical, fierce, with his ridged, obtuse yellow face, and his stubbly grey beard and hair, and his eyes wandering now and again amongst the crowd. But with all his might Laurence kept his face unmoved. Then came the word "Remanded"; and, more like a baited beast than ever, the man was led away.

Laurence sat on, a cold perspiration thick on his forehead. Someone else, then, had come on the body and turned the pockets inside out before John Evan

took the ring. A man such as Walenn would not be out at night without money. Besides, if Evan had found money on the body he would never have run the risk of taking that ring. Yes, someone else had come on the body first. It was for that one to come forward, and prove that the ring was still on the dead man's finger when he left him, and thus clear Evan. He clung to that thought; it seemed to make him less responsible for the little man's position; to remove him and his own deed one step further back. If they found the person who had taken the money, it would prove Evan's innocence. He came out of the court in a sort of trance. And a craving to get drunk attacked him. One could not go on like this without the relief of some oblivion. If he could only get drunk, keep drunk till this business was decided and he knew whether he must give himself up or no. He had now no fear at all of people suspecting him; only fear of himself—fear that he might go and give himself up. Now he could see the girl; the danger from that was as nothing compared with the danger from his own conscience. He had promised Keith not to see her. Keith had been decent and loyal to him—good old Keith! But he would never understand that this girl was now all he cared about in life; that he would rather be cut off from life itself than be cut off from her. Instead of getting less and less, she was getting more and more to him—experience strange and thrilling! Out of deep misery she had grown happy—through him; out of a sordid, shifting life recovered coherence and bloom, through devotion to him—*him*, of all people in the world! It was a miracle. She demanded nothing of him, adored him, as no other woman ever had—it was this which had

anchored his drifting barque ; this—and her truthful mild intelligence, and that burning warmth of a woman, who, long treated by men as but a sack of sex, now loves at last.

And suddenly, mastering his craving to get drunk, he made towards Soho. He had been a fool to give those keys to Keith. She must have been frightened by his visit ; and, perhaps, doubly miserable since, knowing nothing, imagining everything ! Keith was sure to have terrified her. Poor little thing !

Down the street where he had stolen in the dark with the dead body on his back, he almost ran for the cover of her house. The door was opened to him before he knocked, her arms were round his neck, her lips pressed to his. The fire was out, as if she had been unable to remember to keep warm. A stool had been drawn to the window, and there she had evidently been sitting, like a bird in a cage, looking out into the grey street. Though she had been told that he was not to come, instinct had kept her there ; or the pathetic, aching hope against hope which lovers never part with.

Now that he was there, her first thoughts were for his comfort. The fire was lighted. He must eat, drink, smoke. There was never in her doings any of the “ I am doing this for you, but you ought to be doing that for me ” which belongs to so many marriages, and *liaisons*. She was like a devoted slave, so in love with the chains that she never knew she wore them. And to Laurence, who had so little sense of property, this only served to deepen tenderness, and the hold she had on him. He had resolved not to tell her of the new danger he ran from his own conscience. But resolutions with him were but the

opposites of what was sure to come ; and at last the words :

“ They’ve arrested someone,” escaped him.

From her face he knew she had grasped the danger at once ; had divined it, perhaps, before he spoke. But she only twined her arms round him and kissed his lips. And he knew that she was begging him to put his love for her above his conscience. Who would ever have thought that he could feel as he did to this girl who had been in the arms of many ! The stained and suffering past of a loved woman awakens in some men only chivalry ; in others, more respectable, it rouses a tigerish itch, a rancorous jealousy of what in the past was given to others. Sometimes it will do both. When he had her in his arms he felt no remorse for killing the coarse, handsome brute who had ruined her. He savagely rejoiced in it. But when she laid her head in the hollow of his shoulder, turning to him her white face with the faint colour-staining on the parted lips, the cheeks, the eyelids ; when her dark, wide-apart, brown eyes gazed up in the happiness of her abandonment—he felt only tenderness and protection.

He left her at five o’clock, and had not gone two streets’ length before the memory of the little grey vagabond, screwed back in the far corner of the dock like a baited raccoon, of his dreary, creaking voice, took possession of him again ; and a kind of savagery mounted in his brain against a world where one could be so tortured without having meant harm to anyone.

At the door of his lodgings Keith was getting out of a cab. They went in together, but neither of them sat down ; Keith standing with his back to the carefully shut door, Laurence with his back to the table, as

if they knew there was a tug coming. And Keith said :

" There's room on that boat. Go down and book your berth before they shut. Here's the money ! "

" I'm going to stick it, Keith."

Keith stepped forward, and put a roll of notes on the table.

" Now look here, Larry. I've read the police court proceedings. There's nothing in that. Out of prison, or in prison for a few weeks, it's all the same to a night-bird of that sort. Dismiss it from your mind—there's not nearly enough evidence to convict. This gives you your chance. Take it like a man, and make a new life for yourself."

Laurence smiled ; but the smile had a touch of madness and a touch of malice. He took up the notes.

" Clear out, and save the honour of brother Keith. Put them back in your pocket, Keith, or I'll put them in the fire. Come, take them ! " And, crossing to the fire, he held them to the bars. " Take them, or in they go ! "

Keith took back the notes.

" I've still got some kind of honour, Keith ; if I clear out I shall have none, not the rag of any, left. It may be worth more to me than that—I can't tell yet—I can't tell."

There was a long silence before Keith answered.

" I tell you you're mistaken ; no jury will convict. If they did, a judge would never hang on it. A ghou! who can rob a dead body *ought* to be in prison. What he did is worse than what you did, if you come to that ! "

Laurence lifted his face.

"Judge not, brother," he said; "the heart is a dark well."

Keith's yellowish face grew red and swollen, as though he were mastering the tickle of a bronchial cough.

"What are you going to do, then? I suppose I may ask you not to be entirely oblivious of our name; or is such a consideration unworthy of your honour?"

Laurence bent his head. The gesture said more clearly than words: "Don't kick a man when he's down!"

"I don't know what I'm going to do—nothing at present. I'm awfully sorry, Keith; awfully sorry."

Keith looked at him, and without another word went out.

VI

To any, save philosophers, reputation may be threatened almost as much by disgrace to name and family as by the disgrace of self. Keith's instinct was always to deal actively with danger. But this blow, whether it fell on him by discovery or by confession, could not be countered. As blight falls on a rose from who knows where, the scandalous murk would light on him. No repulse possible! Not even a wriggling from under! Brother of a murderer hung or sent to penal servitude! His daughter niece to a murderer! His dead mother—a murderer's mother! And to wait day after day, week after week, not knowing whether the blow would fall, was an extraordinarily atrocious penance, the injustice of which, to a man of rectitude, seemed daily the more monstrous.

The remand had produced evidence that the

murdered man had been drinking heavily on the night of his death, and further evidence of the accused's professional vagabondage and destitution; it was shown, too, that for some time the archway in Glove Lane had been his favourite night haunt. He had been committed for trial in January. This time, despite misgivings, Keith had attended the police court. To his great relief Larry was not there. But the policeman who had come up while he was looking at the archway, and given him afterwards that scare in the girl's rooms, was chief witness to the way the accused man haunted Glove Lane. Though Keith held his silk hat high, he still had the uncomfortable feeling that the man had recognised him.

His conscience suffered few, if any, twinges for letting this man rest under the shadow of the murder. He genuinely believed that there was not evidence enough to convict; nor was it in him to appreciate the tortures of a vagabond shut up. The scamp deserved what he had got, for robbing a dead body; and in any case such a scarecrow was better off in prison than sleeping out under archways in December. Sentiment was foreign to Keith's character, and his justice that of those who subordinate the fates of the weak and shiftless to the needful paramountcy of the strong and well established.

His daughter came back from school for the Christmas holidays. It was hard to look up from her bright eyes and rosy cheeks and see this shadow hanging above his calm and ordered life, as in a glowing room one's eye may catch an impending patch of darkness drawn like a spider's web across a corner of the ceiling.

On the afternoon of Christmas Eve they went, by her desire, to a church in Soho, where the Christmas

Oratorio was being given ; and coming away passed, by chance of a wrong turning, down Borrow Street. Ugh ! How that startled moment, when the girl had pressed herself against him in the dark, and her terror-stricken whisper : “ Oh ! Who is it ? ” leaped out before him ! Always that business—that ghastly business ! After the trial he would have another try to get them both away. And he thrust his arm within his little daughter’s, hurrying her on, out of this street where shadows filled all the winter air.

But that evening when she had gone to bed he felt uncontrollably restless. He had not seen Larry for weeks. What was he about ? What desperations were hatching in his disorderly brain ? Was he very miserable ; had he perhaps sunk into a stupor of debauchery ? And the old feeling of protectiveness rose up in him ; a warmth born of long ago Christmas Eves, when they had stockings hung out in the night stuffed by a Santa Claus, whose hand never failed to tuck them up, whose kiss was their nightly waft into sleep.

Stars were sparkling out there over the river ; the sky frosty-clear, and black. Bells had not begun to ring as yet. And obeying an obscure, deep impulse, Keith wrapped himself once more into his fur coat, pulled a motoring cap over his eyes, and sallied forth.

In the Strand he took a cab to Fitzroy Street. There was no light in Larry’s windows, and on a card he saw the words “ To Let.” Gone ! Had he after all cleared out for good ? But how—without money ? And the girl ? Bells were ringing now in the silent frostiness. Christmas Eve ! And Keith thought : ‘ If only this wretched business were off my mind ! Monstrous that one should suffer for the faults of others ! ’

He took a route which led him past Borrow Street. Solitude brooded there, and he walked resolutely down on the far side, looking hard at the girl's window. There was a light. The curtains just failed to meet, so that a thin gleam shone through. He crossed ; and after glancing swiftly up and down, deliberately peered in.

He only stood there perhaps twenty seconds, but visual records gleaned in a moment sometimes outlast the visions of hours and days. The electric light was not burning ; but, in the centre of the room the girl was kneeling in her nightgown before a little table on which were four lighted candles. Her arms were crossed on her breast ; the candle-light shone on her fair cropped hair, on the profile of cheek and chin, on her bowed white neck. For a moment he thought her alone ; then behind her saw his brother in a sleeping suit, leaning against the wall, with arms crossed, watching. It was the expression on his face which burned the whole thing in, so that always afterwards he was able to see that little scene—such an expression as could never have been on the face of one even faintly conscious that he was watched by any living thing on earth. The whole of Larry's heart and feeling seemed to have come up out of him. Yearning, mockery, love, despair ! The depth of his feeling for this girl, his stress of mind, fears, hopes ; the flotsam good and evil of his soul, all transfigured there, exposed and unforgettable. The candle-light shone upward on to his face, twisted by the strangest smile ; his eyes, darker and more wistful than mortal eyes should be, seemed to beseech and mock the white-clad girl, who, all unconscious, knelt without movement, like a carved figure of devotion. The words seemed coming from

his lips : " Pray for us ! Bravo ! Yes ! Pray for us ! " And suddenly Keith saw her stretch out her arms, and lift her face with a look of ecstasy, and Laurence starting forward. What had she seen beyond the candle flames ? It is the unexpected which invests visions with poignancy. Nothing more strange could Keith have seen in this nest of the murky and illicit. But in sheer panic lest he might be caught thus spying he drew back and hurried on.

So Larry was living there with her ! When the moment came he could still find him.

Before going in, he stood full five minutes leaning on the terrace parapet before his house, gazing at the star-frosted sky, and the river cut by the trees into black pools, oiled over by gleams from the Embankment lamps. And, deep down, behind his mere thoughts, he ached—somehow, somewhere ached. Beyond the cage of all that he saw and heard and thought, he had perceived something he could not reach. But the night was cold, the bells silent, for it had struck twelve. Entering his house, he stole upstairs.

VII

IF for Keith those six weeks before the Glove Lane murder trial came on were fraught with uneasiness and gloom, they were for Laurence almost the happiest since his youth. From the moment when he left his rooms and went to the girl's to live, a kind of peace and exaltation took possession of him. Not by any effort of will did he throw off the nightmare hanging over him. Nor was he drugged by love. He was in a sort of spiritual catalepsy. In face of fate too

powerful for his will, his turmoil, anxiety, and even restlessness had ceased ; his life floated in the ether of " what must come, will." Out of this catalepsy, his spirit sometimes fell headlong into black waters. In one such whirlpool he was struggling on the night of Christmas Eve. When the girl rose from her knees he asked her :

" What did you see ? "

Pressing close to him, she drew him down on to the floor before the fire ; and they sat, knees drawn up, hands clasped, like two children trying to see over the edge of the world.

" It was the Virgin I saw. She stood against the wall and smiled. We shall be happy soon."

" When we die, Wanda," he said, suddenly, " let it be together. We shall keep each other warm, out there."

Huddling to him she whispered : " Yes, oh, yes ! If you die, I could not go on living."

It was this utter dependence on him, the feeling that he had rescued something, which gave him sense of anchorage. That, and his buried life in the retreat of these two rooms. Just for an hour in the morning, from nine to ten, the charwoman would come, but not another soul all day. They never went out together. He would stay in bed late, while Wanda bought what they needed for the day's meals ; lying on his back, hands clasped behind his head, recalling her face, the movements of her slim, rounded, supple figure, robing itself before his eyes ; feeling again the kiss she had left on his lips, the gleam of her soft eyes, so strangely dark in so fair a face. In a sort of trance he would lie till she came back. Then get up to breakfast about noon off things which she had cooked,

drinking coffee. In the afternoon he would go out alone and walk for hours, anywhere, so long as it was East. To the East there was always suffering to be seen, always that which soothed him with the feeling that he and his troubles were only a tiny part of trouble; that while so many other sorrowing and shadowy creatures lived he was not cut off. To go West was to encourage dejection. In the West all was like Keith, successful, immaculate, ordered, resolute. He would come back tired out, and sit watching her cook their little dinner. The evenings were given up to love. Queer trance of an existence, which both were afraid to break. No sign from her of wanting those excitements which girls who have lived her life, even for a few months, are supposed to need. She never asked him to take her anywhere; never, in word, deed, look, seemed anything but almost rapturously content. And yet he knew, and she knew, that they were only waiting to see whether Fate would turn her thumb down on them. In these days he did not drink. Out of his quarter's money, when it came in, he had paid his debts—their expenses were very small. He never went to see Keith, never wrote to him, hardly thought of him. And from those dread apparitions—Walenn lying with the breath choked out of him, and the little grey, driven animal in the dock—he hid, as only a man can who must hide or be destroyed. But daily he bought a newspaper, and feverishly, furtively scanned its columns.

VIII

COMING out of the Law Courts on the afternoon of January 28th, at the triumphant end of a desperately

fought will case, Keith saw on a poster the words : "Glove Lane Murder : Trial and Verdict" ; and with a rush of dismay he thought : "Good God ! I never looked at the paper this morning !" The elation which had filled him a second before, the absorption he had felt for two days now in the case so hardly won, seemed suddenly quite sickeningly trivial. What on earth had he been doing to forget that horrible business even for an instant ? He stood quite still on the crowded pavement, unable, really unable, to buy a paper. But his face was like a piece of iron when he did step forward and hold his penny out. There it was in the Stop Press ! "Glove Lane Murder. The jury returned a verdict of Guilty. Sentence of death was passed."

His first sensation was simple irritation. How had they come to commit such an imbecility ? Monstrous ! The evidence——! Then the futility of even reading the report, of even considering how they had come to record such a verdict struck him with savage suddenness. There it was, and nothing he could do or say would alter it ; no condemnation of this idiotic verdict would help reverse it. The situation was desperate, indeed ! That five minutes' walk from the Law Courts to his chambers was the longest he had ever taken.

Men of decided character little know beforehand what they will do in certain contingencies. For the imaginations of decided people do not endow mere contingencies with sufficient actuality. Keith had never really settled what he was going to do if this man were condemned. Often in those past weeks he had said to himself : "Of course, if they bring him in guilty, that's another thing !" But, now that they had, he was beset by exactly the same old arguments and feelings, the same instincts of loyalty and protection

towards Laurence and himself, intensified by the fearful imminence of the danger. And yet, here was this man about to be hung for a thing he had not done ! Nothing could get over that ! But then he was such a worthless vagabond, a ghoul who had robbed a dead body. If Larry were condemned in his stead, would there be any less miscarriage of justice ? To strangle a brute who had struck you, by the accident of keeping your hands on his throat a few seconds too long, was there any more guilt in that—was there even as much, as in deliberate theft from a dead man ? Reverence for order, for justice, and established fact, will often march shoulder to shoulder with Jesuitry in natures to whom success is vital.

In the narrow stone passage leading to his staircase, a friend had called out : “ Bravo, Darrant ! That was a squeak ! Congratulations ! ” And with a bitter little smile Keith thought : ‘ Congratulations ! I ! ’

At the first possible moment he hurried back to the Strand, and hailing a cab, he told the man to put him down at a turning near to Borrow Street.

It was the girl who opened to his knock. Startled, clasping her hands, she looked strange to Keith in her black skirt and blouse of some soft velvety stuff the colour of faded roses. Her round, rather long throat was bare ; and Keith noticed fretfully that she wore gold earrings. Her eyes, so pitch dark against her white face, and the short fair hair, which curled into her neck, seemed both to search and to plead.

“ My brother ? ”

“ He is not in, sir, yet.”

“ Do you know where he is ? ”

“ No.”

“ He is living with you here now ? ”

" Yes."

" Are you still as fond of him as ever, then ? "

With a movement, as though she despaired of words, she clasped her hands over her heart. And he said :

" I see."

He had the same strange feeling as on his first visit to her, and when through the chink in the curtains he had watched her kneeling—of pity mingled with some faint sexual emotion. And crossing to the fire he asked :

" May I wait for him ? "

" Oh ! Please ! Will you sit down ? "

But Keith shook his head. And with a catch in her breath, she said :

" You will not take him from me. I should die."

He turned round on her sharply.

" I don't want him taken from you. I want to help you keep him. Are you ready to go away, at any time ? "

" Yes. Oh, yes ! "

" And he ? "

She answered almost in a whisper :

" Yes ; but there is that poor man."

" That poor man is a graveyard thief ; a hyena ; a ghoul—not worth consideration." And the rasp in his own voice surprised him.

" Ah ! " she sighed. " But I am sorry for him. Perhaps he was hungry. I have been hungry—you do things then that you would not. And perhaps he has no one to love ; if you have no one to love you can be very bad. I think of him often—in prison."

Between his teeth Keith muttered : " And Laurence ? "

" We do never speak of it, we are afraid."

"He's not told you, then, about the trial?"

Her eyes dilated.

"The trial! Oh! He was strange last night. This morning, too, he got up early. Is it—is it over?"

"Yes."

"What has come?"

"Guilty."

For a moment Keith thought she was going to faint. She had closed her eyes, and swayed so that he took a step, and put his hands on her arms.

"Listen!" he said. "Help me; don't let Laurence out of your sight. We must have time. I must see what they intend to do. They can't be going to hang this man. I must have time, I tell you. You must prevent his giving himself up."

She had opened her eyes at his words, and now stood stone-still, staring in his face, while he still held her arms, gripping into her soft flesh through the velvety sleeves.

"Do you understand?"

"Yes—but if he has already!"

Keith felt the shiver which ran through her. And the thought rushed into his mind: 'My God! Suppose the police come round while I'm here!' He let go her arms. If Larry had indeed gone to them—no reason for himself to be involved more than he must be anyway! If that policeman who had seen him here the night after the murder should find him here again just after the verdict! He said almost fiercely:

"Can I trust you not to let Larry out of your sight? Quick! Answer!"

Clasping her hands to her breast, she answered humbly:

"I will try."

He could not afford to be affected, and still more brusquely said :

"If he hasn't already done this, watch him like a lynx ! Don't let him go out without you. I'll come to-morrow morning early. You're a Catholic, aren't you ? Swear to me that you won't let him do anything till he's seen me again."

She did not answer, looking past him at the door ; and Keith heard a key in the latch. There was Laurence himself, holding in his hand a great bunch of pink lilies and white narcissi. His face was pale and haggard. He said quietly :

"Hallo, Keith !"

The girl had not moved, her eyes were fastened on Larry's face ; and Keith, looking from one to the other, knew that he had never had more need for wariness.

"Have you seen ?" he said.

Laurence nodded. His expression, as a rule so tell-tale of his emotions, baffled Keith utterly.

"Well ?"

"I've been expecting it."

"The thing can't stand—that's certain. But I must have time to look into the report. I must have time to see what I can do. D'you understand me, Larry—I must have time." He knew he was talking at random. The only thing really was to get them clean away at once out of reach of confession ; but he dared not say so.

"Promise me that you'll do nothing, that you won't go out even till I've seen you to-morrow morning."

Again Laurence nodded. And Keith looked at the girl. Would she, could she, see that he did not break that promise ? Her eyes were still fixed immovably

on Larry's face. And with the feeling that he could get no further, Keith turned to go.

"Promise me," he said.

Laurence answered: "I promise."

He was smiling. Keith could make nothing of that smile, nor of the expression in the girl's eyes. And saying: "I have your promise, I rely on it!" he went.

IX

To keep from any woman who loves, knowledge of her lover's mood, is as hard as to keep music from moving the heart. But when that woman has lived in suffering, and for the first time knows the comfort of love, then let the lover try as he may to disguise his heart—no use! Yet by virtue of subtler abnegation she will often succeed in keeping it from him that she knows. For the nature of a man, no matter how unstable and outcast, is to be lost in his own resolves, and unconscious that his heart is being read.

When Keith was gone the girl made no outcry, asked no questions, managed that Larry should not suspect her intuition; all that evening she acted as if she knew of nothing preparing within him, and through him, within herself.

His words, caresses, the very zest with which he helped her to prepare the feast, the flowers he had brought, the wine he made her drink, the avoidance of any word which could spoil their happiness, all—all told her. He was too inexorably gay and loving. Not for her—to whom every word and every kiss had uncannily the desperate value of a last word and kiss—not for her to deprive herself of these by any sign or

gesture which might betray her prescience. Poor soul—she took all, and would have taken more, a hundredfold. She did not want to drink the wine he kept tilting into her glass, but, with the pathetic acceptance learned by women who have lived her life, she did not refuse. She had never refused him anything. So much had been required of her by the detestable, that anything required by the loved one was but an honour.

Laurence drank deeply; but he had never felt clearer, never seen things more vividly. The wine gave him what he wanted, an edge on these few hours of pleasure, an exaltation of energy. It dulled his sense of pity, too. It was pity he was afraid of—for himself, and for this girl. An itch for beauty possessed him—to make even this poor tawdry room look beautiful, with firelight and candlelight, dark amber wine in the glasses, tall pink lilies spilling their saffron, exuding their hot perfume—an itch that she and even himself might look their best. And, with a weight as of lead on her heart, she managed that for him, letting him strew her with flowers and crush them together with herself. Not even music was lacking to their feast. Someone was playing a pianola across the street, and the sound, very faint, came stealing when they were silent—swelling, sinking, festive, mournful; having a far-off life of its own, like the flickering fire-flames before which they lay embraced, or the lilies delicate between the candles. Listening to that music, tracing with his finger the tiny veins on her breast, he lay like one recovering from a swoon. No parting. None! But sleep, as the firelight sleeps when flames die; as music sleeps on its deserted strings!

And the girl watched him.

It was nearly ten when he bade her go to bed. And after she had gone obedient into the bedroom, he brought ink and paper down by the fire. It was strange to himself that he—the drifter, the unstable, the good-for-nothing—did not falter. One would have thought, when it came to the point, he would fail himself. A sort of rage bore him forward. If he lived on, and confessed, they would shut him up, take from him the one thing he loved, cut him off from her; sand up his only well in the desert. Curse them! And he wrote, cross-legged in firelight which mellowed the white sheets of paper; while, against the dark curtain, the girl, in her nightdress, unconscious of the cold, stood watching.

A man, when he drowns, remembers his past. Like the lost poet he had “gone with the wind.” Now it was for him to be true in his fashion. Not really so very strange that he did not falter. A man may falter for weeks and weeks, consciously, subconsciously, even in his dreams, till there comes that moment when the only thing impossible is to go on faltering. The black cap, the little driven grey man looking up at it with a sort of wonder—faltering had ceased!

He had finished now, and was but staring into the fire.

“No more, no more, the moon is dead,
And all the people in it;
The poppy maidens strew the bed,
We’ll come in half a minute.”

Why did doggerel start up in the mind like that? Wanda! The weed flower—become so rare—he would not be parted from her! The fire, the candles, and the fire—no more the flame and flicker!

And, by the dark curtain, the girl watched.

X

KEITH went, not home, but to his club ; and in the room devoted to the reception of guests, empty at this hour, he sat down and read the report of the trial. The fools had made out a case that looked black enough. And for a long time, on the thick soft carpet which let out no sound of footfall, he paced up and down, thinking. He might see the defending counsel, might surely do that as an expert who thought there had been miscarriage of justice. They must appeal ; a petition too might be started in the last event. The thing could—must be put right yet, if only Larry and that girl did nothing !

He had no appetite, but the custom of dining is too strong. And while he ate, he glanced with irritation at his fellow-members. They looked so at their ease. Unjust ! Unjust—that this black cloud should hang over one as blameless as any of them ! Friends, connoisseurs of such things—a judge among them—came specially to his table to express their admiration of his conduct of that will case. To-night he had real excuse for pride, but he felt none. Yet, in this well-warmed quietly glowing room, filled with decorously eating, decorously talking men, he gained insensibly some comfort. This surely was reality ; that shadowy business out there was like the drear sound of a wind one must and did keep out—like the poverty and grime which had no real existence for the secure and prosperous. He drank champagne. It helped to fortify reality, to make shadows seem more shadowy. And down in the smoking-room he sat before the fire, in one of those chairs which embalm after-dinner dreams.

He had earned rest. He grew sleepy there, and at eleven o'clock rose to go home. But when he had once passed down the shallow marble steps, out through the revolving door which let in no draughts, he was visited by fear, as if he had drawn it in with the breath of the January wind. Larry's face ; and the girl watching it ! Why had she watched like that ? Larry's smile ; and the flowers in his hand ? Buying flowers at such a moment ! The girl was his slave—whatever he told her, she would do. But she would never be able to stop him. At this very moment he might be rushing to give himself up !

His hand, thrust deep into the pocket of his fur coat, came in contact suddenly with something cold. The keys Larry had given him all that time ago. There they had lain forgotten ever since. The chance touch decided him. He turned off towards Borrow Street, walking at full speed. He could but go again and see. He would sleep better if he knew that he had left no stone unturned. At the corner of that dismal street he had to wait for solitude before he made for the house which he now loathed with such deadly loathing. He opened the outer door and shut it to behind him. He would not make that mistake a second time. The same dim gaslight in the passage, the same smell of oilcloth ! He knocked, but no one came. Perhaps they had gone to bed. Again and again he knocked, then opened the door, stepped in, and closed it carefully. Candles lighted, the fire burning ; cushions thrown on the floor in front of it and strewn with flowers ! The table, too, covered with flowers and with the remnants of a meal. Through the half-drawn curtain he could see that the inner room was also lighted. Had they gone out, leaving everything like this ? Gone out ! To —do

what ? His heart beat sickeningly. Bottles ! Larry had been drinking !

Had it really come ? Must he go back home with this murk on him ; knowing that his brother was a confessed and branded murderer ? He went quickly to the half-drawn curtains and looked in. In the corner against the wall he saw a bed, and those two in it, asleep. And he recoiled in sheer amazement and relief. Asleep ! Asleep with curtains undrawn, lights left on ? Asleep through all his knocking ! They must both be drunk. The blood rushed up in his neck, and he stood shivering. Asleep ! And, suddenly, rushing forward again, he called out : " Larry ! " beating on the wood-work loudly. With a gasp he went towards the bed, and cried again : " Larry ! " No answer ! No movement ! Seizing his brother's shoulder, he shook it violently. It felt cold. They were lying in each other's arms, breast to breast, lips to lips, their faces white in the electric light shining above the dressing-table by the foot of the bed. And such a shudder shook Keith that he had to grasp the brass rail above their heads. Then he bent down, and wetting his finger, placed it close to their joined lips. A swoon ? No two could ever swoon so utterly as that ; not even a drunken sleep could be so fast. His wet finger felt not the faintest stir of air, nor was there any movement in the pulses of their hands. No breath ! No life ! The eyes of the girl were closed. How strangely innocent she looked ! Larry's open eyes seemed to be gazing at her shut eyes ; but Keith saw that they were sightless. With a sort of sob he drew down the lids. Then, by an impulse that he could never have explained, he laid a hand on his brother's head, and a hand on the girl's fair hair. The clothes had fallen down a little

from her bare shoulder ; he pulled them up, as if to keep her warm, and caught the glint of metal ; a tiny gilt crucifix no longer than a thumbnail, on a thread of steel chain, had slipped down from her breast into the hollow of the arm which lay round Larry's neck. Keith buried it beneath the clothes. Then for the first time he noticed an envelope pinned to the coverlet ; and, bending down, read : " Please give this at once to the police.—LAURENCE DARRANT." Snatching, he thrust it into his pocket. And, like elastic stretched beyond its uttermost, his reason, will, faculties of calculation and resolve snapped to within him. He thought with incredible swiftness : ' I must know nothing of this. I must go ! ' And almost before he knew that he had moved, he was out again in the street.

He could never have told of what he thought while he was walking home. He did not really come to himself till he was in his study. There, with a trembling hand, he poured himself out whisky and drank it off. If he had not chanced to go there, the charwoman would have found them when she came in the morning, and given that envelope to the police ! He took it out. He had a right—a right to know what was in it ! He broke it open.

" I, Laurence Darrant, about to die by my own hand, declare that this is a solemn and true confession. I committed what is known as the Glove Lane Murder on the night of November the 27th last in the following way"—on and on to the last words—" We didn't want to die ; but we could not bear separation, and I couldn't face letting an innocent man be hung for me. I do not see any other way. I beg that there may be no *post-mortem* on our bodies. The stuff we have taken

is some of that which will be found on the dressing-table. Please bury us together.

“LAURENCE DARRANT.

“*January the 28th, about ten o'clock p.m.*”

Full five minutes Keith stood with those sheets of paper in his hand, while the clock ticked, the wind moaned a little in the trees outside, the flames licked the logs with the quiet click and ruffle of their intense far-away life down there on the hearth. Then he roused himself, and sat down to read the whole again.

There it was, just as Larry had told it to him—nothing left out, very clear; even to the addresses of people who could identify the girl as having once been Walenn's wife or mistress. It would convince. Yes! It would convince.

The sheets dropped from his hand. Very slowly he was grasping the appalling fact that on the floor beside his chair lay the life or death of yet another man; that by taking this confession he had taken into his own hands the fate of the vagabond lying under sentence of death; that he could not give him back his life without incurring the smirch of this disgrace, without even endangering himself. If he let this confession reach the authorities, he could never escape the gravest suspicion that he had known of the whole affair during these two months. He would have to attend the inquest, and be recognised by that policeman as having come to the archway to see where the body had lain, as having visited the girl the very evening after the murder. Who would believe in the mere coincidence of such visits on the part of the murderer's brother. But apart from that suspicion, the fearful scandal which so sensational an affair must make would mar his

career, his life, his little daughter's life ! Larry's suicide with this poor girl would make sensation enough as it was ; but nothing to that other. Such a death had its romance ; involved him in no way save as a mourner, could perhaps even be hushed up ! The other—nothing could hush that up, nothing prevent its ringing to the house-tops. He got up from his chair in sheer agitation, and for many minutes roamed up and down the room, unable to get his mind to bear on the issue at all. Images kept starting up before him. The face of the man who handed him wig and gown each morning, puffy and curious, with a sort of leer on it that he had never noticed before ; his young daughter's face, with lifted eyebrows, mouth drooping, eyes troubled ; the tiny gilt crucifix glinting in the hollow of the dead girl's arm ; the sightless look in Larry's unclosed eyes ; even his own thumb and finger pulling the lids down. And then he saw a street and endless people passing, turning to stare at him. And, stopping in his tramp, he said aloud : " Let them go to hell ! Seven days' wonder ! " Was he not trustee to that confession ! Trustee ! After all he had done nothing to be ashamed of, even if he had kept knowledge dark. A brother ! Who could blame him ? And he picked up those sheets of paper. But then, like a great murky hand, the scandal spread itself about him ; its coarse malignant voice seemed shouting : " Paiper ! . . . Paiper ! . . . Glove Lane Murder ! . . . Suicide and confession of brother of well-known K.C. . . . Well-known K.C.'s brother . . . Murder and suicide . . . Paiper ! " Was he to let loose that flood of foulness ? Was he, who had done nothing, to smirch his own little daughter's life ; to smirch his dead brother, their dead mother—himself, his own valuable, important future ? And all

for a rat, a sewer rat ! Let him hang, let the fellow hang if he must ! And that was not certain. Appeal ! Petition ! He might—he should be saved ! To have got thus far, and then, by his own action, topple himself down !

With a sudden, darting movement he thrust the confession in among the burning coals. And a smile licked at the folds in his dark face, like those flames licking the sheets of paper, till they writhed and blackened. With the toe of his boot he dispersed their scorched and crumbling wafer. Stamp them in ! Stamp in that man's life ! Burnt ! No more doubts, no more of this gnawing fear ! Burnt ? A man—an innocent—sewer rat ! Poison ! Recoiling from the fire he grasped his forehead. It was burning hot and seemed to be going round.

Well, it was done ! Only fools without will or purpose regretted. And suddenly he laughed. So Larry had died for nothing ! Nothing ! He had no will, no purpose, and he was dead ! He and that girl might now have been living, loving each other in the warm night, away at the other end of the world, instead of lying dead in the cold night here ! Fools and weaklings regretted, suffered from conscience and remorse. A man trod firmly, held to his purpose, no matter what !

He went to the window and drew back the curtain. What—what was that ? A gibbet in the air, a body hanging ? Ah ! Only the trees—the dark trees—the winter skeleton trees ! But, recoiling, he returned to his armchair and sat down before the fire. Yes ! It had been shining like that, the lamp turned low, his chair drawn up, when Larry came in that afternoon two months ago. Bah ! He had never come at all !

It was a nightmare. He had been asleep. How his head burned! And leaping up, he looked at the calendar on his bureau. "January the 28th!" No dream! No dream! His face hardened and darkened. On! Not like Larry! On!

1914.

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THE JURYMAN

I.

"Don't you see, brother, I was reading yesterday the Gospel about Christ, the little Father; how He suffered, how He walked on the earth. I suppose you have heard about it?"

"Indeed, I have," replied Stepanutch; "but we are people in darkness; we can't read."—TOLSTOI.

MR. HENRY BOSENGATE, of the London Stock Exchange, seated himself in his car that morning during the great war with a sense of injury. Major in a Volunteer Corps; member of all the local committees; lending this very car to the neighbouring hospital, at times even driving it himself for their benefit; subscribing to funds, so far as his diminished income permitted—he was conscious of being an asset to the country, and one whose time could not be wasted with impunity. To be summoned to sit on a jury at the local assizes, and not even the grand jury at that! It was in the nature of an outrage.

Strong and upright, with hazel eyes and dark eyebrows, pinkish-brown cheeks, a forehead white, well-shaped, and getting high, with greyish hair glossy and well-brushed, and a trim moustache, he might have been taken for that colonel of Volunteers which indeed he was in a fair way of becoming.

His wife had followed him out under the porch, and stood bracing her supple body clothed in lilac linen. Red rambler roses formed a sort of crown to her dark head; her ivory-coloured face had in it just a suggestion of the Japanese.

Mr. Bosengate spoke through the whirr of the engine:

"I don't expect to be late, dear. This business is

ridiculous. There oughtn't to *be* any crime in these days."

His wife—her name was Kathleen—smiled. She looked very pretty and cool, Mr. Bosengate thought. To one bound on this dull and stuffy business everything he owned seemed pleasant—the geranium beds beside the gravel drive, his long, red-brick house mellowing decorously in its creepers and ivy, the little clock-tower over stables now converted to a garage, the dovecote, masking at the other end the conservatory which adjoined the billiard-room. Close to the red-brick lodge his two children, Kate and Harry, ran out from under the acacia trees, and waved to him, scrambling bare-legged on to the low, red, ivy-covered wall which guarded his domain of eleven acres. Mr. Bosengate waved back, thinking: 'Jolly couple—by Jove, they are!' Above their heads, through the trees, he could see right away to some Downs, faint in the July heat haze. And he thought: 'Pretty a spot as one could have got, so close to Town!'

Despite the war he had enjoyed these last two years more than any of the ten since he built "Charmleigh" and settled down to semi-rural domesticity with his young wife. There had been a certain piquancy, a savour added to existence, by the country's peril, and all the public service and sacrifice it demanded. His chauffeur was gone, and one gardener did the work of three. He enjoyed—positively enjoyed, his committee work; even the serious decline of business and increase of taxation had not much worried one continually conscious of the national crisis and his own part therein. The country had wanted waking up, wanted a lesson in effort and economy; and the feeling that he had not spared himself in these strenuous

times, had given a zest to those quiet pleasures of bed and board which, at his age, even the most patriotic could retain with a good conscience. He had denied himself many things—new clothes, presents for Kathleen and the children, travel, and that pine-apple house which he had been on the point of building when the war broke out ; new wine, too, and cigars, and membership of the two Clubs which he had never used in the old days. The hours had seemed fuller and longer, sleep better earned—wonderful, the things one could do without when put to it ! He turned the car into the high road, driving dreamily for he was in plenty of time. The war was going pretty well now ; he was no fool optimist, but now that conscription was in force, one might reasonably hope for its end within a year. Then there would be a boom, and one might let oneself go a little. Visions of theatres and supper with his wife at the Savoy afterwards, and cosy night drives back into the sweet-smelling country behind your own chauffeur once more teased a fancy which even now did not soar beyond the confines of domestic pleasures. He pictured his wife in new dresses by Jay—she was fifteen years younger than himself, and “paid for dressing” as they said. He had always delighted—as men older than their wives will—in the admiration she excited from others not privileged to enjoy her charms. Her rather queer and ironical beauty, her cool irreproachable wifeliness, was a constant balm to him. They would give dinner parties again, have their friends down from town, and he would once more enjoy sitting at the foot of the dinner table while Kathleen sat at the head, with the light soft on her ivory shoulders, behind flowers she had arranged in that original way of hers, and fruit which he had grown in

his hot-houses ; once more he would take legitimate interest in the wine he offered to his guests—once more stock that Chinese cabinet wherein he kept cigars. Yes—there was a certain satisfaction in these days of privation, if only from the anticipation they created.

The sprinkling of villas had become continuous on either side of the high road ; and women going out to shop, tradesmen's boys delivering victuals, young men in khaki, began to abound. Now and then a limping or bandaged form would pass—some bit of human wreckage ; and Mr. Bosengate would think mechanically : ' Another of those poor devils ! Wonder if we've had his case before us ! '

Running his car into the best hotel garage of the little town, he made his way leisurely over to the court. It stood back from the market-place, and was already lapped by a sea of persons having, as in the outer ring at race meetings, an air of business at which one must not be caught out, together with a soaked or flushed appearance. Mr. Bosengate could not resist putting his handkerchief to his nose. He had carefully drenched it with lavender water, and to this fact owed, perhaps, his immunity from the post of foreman on the jury—for, say what you will about the English, they have a deep instinct for affairs.

He found himself second in the front row of the jury box, and through the odour of " Sanitas " gazed at the judge's face expressionless up there, for all the world like a bewigged bust. His fellows in the box had that appearance of falling between two classes characteristic of jurymen. Mr. Bosengate was not impressed. On one side of him the foreman sat, a prominent upholsterer, known in the town as " Gentleman Fox." His dark and beautifully brushed and

oiled hair and moustache, his radiant linen, gold watch and chain, the white piping to his waistcoat, and a habit of never saying "Sir" had long marked him out from commoner men; he undertook to bury people too, to save them trouble; and was altogether superior. On the other side Mr. Bosengate had one of those men, who, except when they sit on juries, are never seen without a little brown bag, and the appearance of having been interrupted in a drink. Pale and shiny, with large loose eyes shifting from side to side, he had an underdone voice and uneasy flabby hands. Mr. Bosengate disliked sitting next to him. Beyond this commercial traveller sat a dark pale young man with spectacles; beyond him again, a short old man with grey moustache, mutton chops, and innumerable wrinkles; and the front row was completed by a chemist. The three immediately behind, Mr. Bosengate did not thoroughly master; but the three at the end of the second row he learned in their order of an oldish man in a grey suit, given to winking; an inanimate person with the mouth of a moustachioed cod-fish, over whose long bald crown three wisps of damp hair were carefully arranged; and a dried, dapperish, clean-shorn man, whose mouth seemed terrified lest it should be surprised without a smile. Their first and second verdicts were recorded without the necessity for withdrawal, and Mr. Bosengate was already sleepy when the third case was called. The sight of khaki revived his drooping attention. But what a weedy-looking specimen! This prisoner had a truly nerveless pitiable dejected air. If he had ever had a military bearing it had shrunk into him during his confinement. His ill-shaped brown tunic, whose little brass buttons seemed trying to keep smiling, struck Mr. Bosengate

as ridiculously short, used though he was to such things. 'Absurd,' he thought—'Lumbago! Just where they ought to be covered!' Then the officer and gentleman stirred in him, and he added to himself: 'Still, there must be some distinction made!' The little soldier's visage had once perhaps been tanned, but was now the colour of dark dough; his large brown eyes with white showing below the iris, as so often in the eyes of very nervous people—wandered from face to face, of judge, counsel, jury, and public. There were hollows in his cheeks, his dark hair looked damp; around his neck he wore a bandage. The commercial traveller on Mr. Bosengate's left turned, and whispered: "*Felo de se!* My hat! what a guy!" Mr. Bosengate pretended not to hear—he could not bear that fellow!—and slowly wrote on a bit of paper: "Owen Lewis." Welsh! Well, he looked it—not at all an English face. Attempted suicide—not at all an English crime! Suicide implied surrender, a putting-up of hands to Fate—to say nothing of the religious aspect of the matter. And suicide in khaki seemed to Mr. Bosengate particularly abhorrent; like turning tail in face of the enemy; almost meriting the fate of a deserter. He looked at the prisoner, trying not to give way to this prejudice. And the prisoner seemed to look at him, though this, perhaps, was fancy.

The Counsel for the prosecution, a little, alert, grey, decided man, above military age, began detailing the circumstances of the crime. Mr. Bosengate, though not particularly sensitive to atmosphere, could perceive a sort of current running through the Court. It was as if jury and public were thinking rhythmically in obedience to the same unexpressed prejudice of which he himself was conscious. Even the Cæsar-like pale

face up there, presiding, seemed in its ironic serenity responding to that current.

"Gentlemen of the jury, before I call my evidence, I direct your attention to the bandage the accused is still wearing. He gave himself this wound with his Army razor, adding, if I may say so, insult to the injury he was inflicting on his country. He pleads not guilty ; and before the magistrates he said that absence from his wife was preying on his mind"—the advocate's close lips widened—"Well, gentlemen, if such an excuse is to weigh with us in these days, I'm sure I don't know what's to happen to the Empire."

'No, by George!' thought Mr. Bosengate.

The evidence of the first witness, a room-mate who had caught the prisoner's hand, and of the sergeant, who had at once been summoned, was conclusive and he began to cherish a hope that they would get through without withdrawing, and he would be home before five. But then a hitch occurred. The regimental doctor failed to respond when his name was called ; and the judge having for the first time that day showed himself capable of human emotion, intimated that he would adjourn until the morrow.

Mr. Bosengate received the announcement with equanimity. He would be home even earlier ! And gathering up the sheets of paper he had scribbled on, he put them in his pocket and got up. The would-be suicide was being taken out of the court—a shambling drab figure with shoulders hunched. What good were men like that in these days ! What good ! The prisoner looked up. Mr. Bosengate encountered in full the gaze of those large brown eyes, with the white showing underneath. What a suffering, wretched, pitiful face ! A man had no business to give you a look

like that! The prisoner passed on down the stairs, and vanished. Mr. Bosengate went out and across the market place to the garage of the hotel where he had left his car. The sun shone fiercely and he thought: 'I must do some watering in the garden.' He brought the car out, and was about to start the engine, when someone passing, said: "Good evenin'. Seedy-lookin' beggar that last prisoner, ain't he? We don't want men of that stamp." It was his neighbour on the jury, the commercial traveller, in a straw hat, with a little brown bag already in his hand and the froth of an interrupted drink on his moustache. Answering curtly: "Good evening!" and thinking: 'Nor of yours, my friend!' Mr. Bosengate started the car with unnecessary clamour. But as if brought back to life by the commercial traveller's remark, the prisoner's figure seemed to speed along too, turning up at Mr. Bosengate his pitifully unhappy eyes. Want of his wife!—queer excuse that for trying to put it out of his power ever to see her again! Why! Half a loaf, even a slice, was better than no bread. Not many of that neurotic type in the Army—thank Heaven! The lugubrious figure vanished, and Mr. Bosengate pictured instead the form of his own wife bending over her "Gloire de Dijon"s in the rosery, where she generally worked a little before tea now that they were short of gardeners. He saw her, as often he had seen her, raise herself and stand, head to one side, in gloved hand on her slender hip, gazing as it were ironically from under drooped lids at buds which did not come out fast enough. And the word '*Caline*,' for he was something of a French scholar, shot through his mind: 'Kathleen—*Caline*!' If he found her there when he got in, he would steal up on the grass and—ah! but with great

care not to crease her dress or disturb her hair ! ‘ If only she weren’t quite so self-contained,’ he thought ; ‘ It’s like a cat you can’t get near, not really near ! ’

The car, returning faster than it had come down that morning, had already passed the outskirt villas, and was breasting the hill to where, among fields and the old trees, Charmleigh lay apart from commoner life. Turning into his drive, Mr. Bosengate thought with a certain surprise : ‘ I wonder what she *does* think of ! I wonder ! ’ He put his gloves and bat down in the outer hall and went into the lavatory to dip his face in cool water and wash it with sweet-smelling soap—delicious revenge on the unclean atmosphere in which he had been stewing so many hours. He came out again into the hall dazed by soap and the mellowed light, and a voice from half-way up the stairs said : “ Daddy ! Look ! ” His little daughter was standing up there with one hand on the bannisters. She scrambled on to them and came sliding down, her frock up to her eyes, and her holland knickers to her middle. Mr. Bosengate said mildly :

“ Well, that’s elegant ! ”

“ Tea’s in the summer-house. Mummy’s waiting. Come on ! ”

With her hand in his, Mr. Bosengate went on, through the drawing-room, long and cool, with sun-blinds down, through the billiard-room, high and cool, through the conservatory, green and sweet-smelling, out on to the terrace and the upper lawn. He had never felt such sheer exhilarated joy in his home surroundings, so cool, glistening and green under the July sun ; and he said :

“ Well, Kit, what have you all been doing ? ”

“ I’ve fed my rabbits and Harry’s ; and we’ve been

in the attic ; Harry got his leg through the skylight."

Mr. Bosengate drew in his breath with a hiss.

" It's all right, Daddy ; we got it out again, it's only grazed the skin. And we've been making swabs—I made seventeen, Mummy made thirty-three, and then she went to the hospital. Did you put many men in prison ? "

Mr. Bosengate cleared his throat. The question seemed to him untimely.

" Only two."

" What's it like in prison, Daddy ? "

Mr. Bosengate, who had no more knowledge than his little daughter, replied in an absent voice :

" Not very nice."

They were passing under a young oak tree, where the path wound round to the rosery and summer-house. Something shot down and clawed Mr. Bosengate's neck. His little daughter began to hop and suffocate with laughter.

" Oh, Daddy ! Aren't you caught ! I led you on purpose ! "

Looking up, Mr. Bosengate saw his small son lying along a low branch above him—like the leopard he was declaring himself to be (for fear of error), and thought blithely : ' What an active little chap it is ! '

" Let me drop on your shoulders, Daddy—like they do on the deer."

" Oh, yes ! Do be a deer, Daddy ! "

Mr. Bosengate did not see being a deer ; his hair had just been brushed. But he entered the rosery buoyantly between his offspring. His wife was standing precisely as he had imagined her, in a pale blue frock open at the neck, with a narrow black band

round the waist, and little accordion pleats below. She looked her coolest. Her smile, when she turned her head, hardly seemed to take Mr. Bosengate seriously enough. He placed his lips below one of her half-drooped eyelids. She even smelled of roses. His children began to dance round their mother, and Mr. Bosengate, firmly held between them, was also compelled to do this, until she said :

“ When you’ve quite done, let’s have tea ! ”

It was not the greeting he had imagined coming along in the car. Earwigs were plentiful in the summer-house—used perhaps twice a year, but indispensable to every country residence—and Mr. Bosengate was not sorry for the excuse to get out again. Though all was so pleasant, he felt oddly restless, rather suffocated ; and lighting his pipe, began to move about among the roses, blowing tobacco at the greenfly ; in war-time one was never quite idle ! And suddenly he said :

“ We’re trying a wretched Tommy at the assizes.”

His wife looked up from a rose.

“ What for ? ”

“ Attempted suicide.”

“ Why did he ? ”

“ Can’t stand the separation from his wife.”

She looked at him, gave a low laugh, and said :

“ Oh dear ! ”

Mr. Bosengate was puzzled. Why did she laugh ? He looked round, saw that the children were gone, took his pipe from his mouth, and approached her.

“ You look very pretty,” he said. “ Give me a kiss ! ”

His wife bent her body forward from the waist, and pushed her lips out till they touched his moustache. Mr. Bosengate felt a sensation as if he had arisen from

breakfast without having eaten marmalade. He mastered it, and said :

“ That jury are a rum lot.”

His wife's eyelids flickered. “ I wish women sat on juries.”

“ Why ? ”

“ It would be an experience.”

Not the first time she had used that curious expression ! Yet her life was far from dull, so far as he could see ; with the new interests created by the war, and the constant calls on her time made by the perfection of their home life, she had a useful and busy existence. Again the random thought passed through him : ‘ But she never tells me anything ! ’ And suddenly that lugubrious khaki-clad figure started up among the rose bushes. “ We've got a lot to be thankful for ! ” he said abruptly. “ I must go to work ! ” His wife, raising one eyebrow, smiled. “ And I to weep ! ” Mr. Bosengate laughed—she had a pretty wit ! And stroking his comely moustache where it had been kissed, he moved out into the sunshine. All the evening, throughout his labours, not inconsiderable, for this jury business had put him behind time, he was afflicted by that restless pleasure in his surroundings ; would break off in mowing the lower lawn to look at the house through the trees ; would leave his study and committee papers, to cross into the drawing-room and sniff its dainty fragrance ; paid a special good-night visit to the children having supper in the schoolroom ; pottered in and out from his dressing room to admire his wife while she was changing for dinner ; dined with his mind perpetually on the next course ; talked volubly of the war ; and in the billiard room afterwards, smoking the pipe which had taken the place

of his cigar, could not keep still, but roamed about, now in conservatory, now in the drawing-room, where his wife and the governess were still making swabs. It seemed to him that he could not have enough of anything. About eleven o'clock he strolled out—beautiful night, only just dark enough—under the new arrangement with Time—and went down to the little round fountain below the terrace. His wife was playing the piano. Mr. Bosengate looked at the water and the flat dark water-lily leaves which floated there; looked up at the house, where only narrow chinks of light showed, because of the Lighting Order. The dreamy music drifted out; there was a scent of heliotrope. He moved a few steps back, and sat in the children's swing under an old lime tree. Jolly—blissful—in the warm, bloomy dark! Of all hours of the day, this before going to bed was perhaps the pleasantest. He saw the light go up in his wife's bedroom, unscreened for a full minute, and thought: 'Aha! If I did my duty as a special, I should "strafe" her for that.' She came to the window, her figure lighted, hands up to the back of her head, so that her bare arms gleamed. Mr. Bosengate wafted her a kiss, knowing he could not be seen. 'Lucky chap!' he mused; 'she's a great joy!' Up went her arm, down came the blind—the house was dark again. He drew a long breath. 'Another ten minutes,' he thought, 'then I'll go in and shut up. By Jove! The limes are beginning to smell already!' And, the better to take in that acme of his well-being, he tilted the swing, lifted his feet from the ground, and swung himself toward the scented blossoms. He wanted to overwhelm his senses in their perfume, and closed his eyes. But instead of the domestic vision he expected, the face

of the little Welsh soldier, hare-eyed, shadowy, pinched and dark and pitiful, started up with such disturbing vividness that he opened his eyes again at once. Curse ! The fellow almost haunted one ! Where would he be now—poor little devil !—lying in his cell, thinking—thinking of his wife ! Feeling suddenly morbid, Mr. Bosengate arrested the swing and stood up. Absurd !—all his well-being and mood of warm anticipation had deserted him ! ‘ A d——d world ! ’ he thought. ‘ Such a lot of misery ! Why should I have to sit in judgment on that poor beggar, and condemn him ? ’ He moved up on to the terrace and walked briskly, to rid himself of this disturbance before going in. ‘ That commercial traveller chap,’ he thought ‘ the rest of those fellows—they see nothing ! ’ And, abruptly turning up the three stone steps, he entered the conservatory, locked it, passed into the billiard room, and drank his barley water. One of the pictures was hanging crooked ; he went up to put it straight. Still life. Grapes and apples, and—lobsters ! They struck him as odd for the first time. Why lobsters ? The whole picture seemed dead and oily. He turned off the light, and went upstairs, passed his wife’s door, into his own room, and undressed. Clothed in his pyjamas he opened the door between the rooms. By the light coming from his own he could see her dark head on the pillow. Was she asleep ? No—not asleep, certainly. The moment of fruition had come ; the crowning of his pride and pleasure in his home. But he continued to stand there. He had suddenly no pride, no pleasure, no desire ; nothing but a sort of dull resentment against everything. He turned back ; shut the door, and slipping between the heavy curtains and his open window, stood looking out at the night.

'Full of misery!' he thought. 'Full of d—d misery!'

II.

FILING into the jury box next morning, Mr. Bosengate collided slightly with a short jurymen, whose square figure and square head of stiff yellow-red hair he had only vaguely noticed the day before. The man looked angry, and Mr. Bosengate thought: 'An ill-bred dog, that!'

He sat down quickly, and, to avoid further recognition of his fellows, gazed in front of him. His appearance on Saturdays was always military, by reason of the route march of his Volunteer Corps in the afternoon. Gentleman Fox, who belonged to the corps too, was also looking square; but that commercial traveller on his other side seemed more *louche*, and as if surprised in immorality, than ever; only the proximity of Gentleman Fox on the other side kept Mr. Bosengate from shrinking. Then he saw the prisoner being brought in, shadowy and dark behind the brightness of his buttons, and he experienced a sort of shock, this figure was so exactly that which had several times started up in his mind. Somehow he had expected a fresh sight of the fellow to dispel and disprove what had been haunting him, had expected to find him just an outside phenomenon, not, as it were, a part of his own life. And he gazed at the carven immobility of the judge's face, trying to steady himself, as a drunken man will, by looking at a light. The regimental doctor, unabashed by the judge's comment on his absence the day before, gave his evidence like a man who had better things to do, and the case for the prosecution was

forthwith rounded in by a little speech from counsel. The matter—he said—was clear as daylight. Those who wore His Majesty's uniform, charged with the responsibility and privilege of defending their country, were no more entitled to desert their regiments by taking their own lives than they were entitled to desert in any other way. He asked for a conviction. Mr. Bosengate felt a sympathetic shuffle passing through all feet ; the judge was speaking :

“ Prisoner, you can either go into the witness box and make your statement on oath, in which case you may be cross-examined on it ; or you can make your statement there from the dock, in which case you will not be cross-examined. Which do you elect to do ? ”

“ From here, my lord.”

Seeing him now full face, and, as it might be, come to life in the effort to convey his feelings, Mr. Bosengate had suddenly a quite different impression of the fellow. It was as if his khaki had fallen off, and he had stepped out of his own shadow, a live and quivering creature. His pinched clean-shaven face seemed to have an irregular, wilder, hairier look, his large nervous brown eyes darkened and glowed ; he jerked his shoulders, his arms, his whole body, like a man suddenly freed from cramp or a suit of armour. He spoke, too, in a quick, crisp, rather high voice, pinching his consonants a little, sharpening his vowels, like a true Welshman.

“ My lord and misters the jury,” he said : “ I was a hairdresser when the call came on me to join the army. I had a little home and a wife. I never thought what it would be like to be away from them, I surely never did ; and I'm ashamed to be speaking it out like this—how it can squeeze and squeeze a man, how it

can prey on your mind, when you're nervous like I am. 'Tis not everyone that cares for his home—there's lots o' them never wants to see their wives again. But for me 'tis like being shut up in a cage, it is ! ” Mr. Bosengate saw daylight between the skinny fingers of the man's hand thrown out with a jerk. “ I cannot bear it shut up away from wife and home like what you are in the army. So when I took my razor that morning I was wild—an' I wouldn't be here now but for that man catching my hand. There was no reason in it, I'm willing to confess. It was foolish ; but wait till you get feeling like what I was, and see how it draws you. Mist'ers the jury, don't send me back to prison ; it is worse still there. If you have wives you will know what it is like for lots of us ; only some is more nervous than others. I swear to you, sirs, I could not help it——” Again the little man flung out his hand, and his whole thin body shook. Mr. Bosengate felt the same sensation as when he drove his car over a dog—“ Mist'ers the jury, I hope you may never in your lives feel as I've been feeling.”

The little man ceased, his eyes shrank back into their sockets, his figure back into its mask of shadowy brown and gleaming buttons, and Mr. Bosengate was conscious that the judge was making a series of remarks ; and, very soon, of being seated at a mahogany table in the jury's withdrawing room, hearing the voice of the man with hair like an Irish terrier's saying : “ Didn't he talk through his hat, that little blighter ! ” Conscious, too, of the commercial traveller, still on his left—always on his left !—mopping his brow, and muttering : “ Phew ! It's hot in there to-day ! ” while an effluvium, as of an inside accustomed to whisky

came from him. Then the man with the underlip and the three plastered wisps of hair said :

“ Don’t know why we withdrew, Mr. Foreman ! ”

Mr. Bosengate looked round to where, at the head of the table, Gentleman Fox sat, in defensive gentility and the little white piping to his waistcoat. “ I shall be happy to take the sense of the jury ” ; he was saying blandly.

There was a short silence, then the chemist murmured :

“ I should say he must have what they call claustrophobia.”

“ Clauster fiddlesticks ! The feller’s a shirker, that’s all. Missed his wife—pretty excuse ! Indecent, I call it ! ”

The speaker was the little wire-haired man ; and emotion, deep and angry, stirred in Mr. Bosengate. That ill-bred little cur ! He gripped the edge of the table with both hands.

“ I think it’s d——d natural ! ” he muttered. But almost before the words had left his lips he felt dismay. What had he said—he, nearly a colonel of volunteers—endorsing such a want of patriotism ! And hearing the commercial traveller murmuring : “ ‘ Ear, ‘ ear ! ” he reddened violently.

The wire-headed man said roughly :

“ There’s too many of these blighted shirkers, and too much pampering of them.”

The turmoil in Mr. Bosengate increased ; he remarked in an icy voice :

“ I agree to no verdict that’ll send the man back to prison.”

At this a real tremor seemed to go round the table, as if they all saw themselves sitting there through lunch

time. Then the large grey-haired man given to winking, said :

" Oh ! Come, sir—after what the judge said ! Come, sir ! What do you say, Mr. Foreman ? "

Gentleman Fox—as who should say " This is excellent value, but I don't wish to press it on you ! "—answered :

" We are only concerned with the facts. Did he or did he not try to shorten his life ? "

" Of course he did—said so himself," Mr. Bosengate heard the wire-haired man snap out, and from the following murmur of assent he alone abstained. Guilty ! Well—yes ! There was no way out of admitting that, but his feelings revolted against handing " that poor little beggar " over to the tender mercy of his country's law. His whole soul rose in arms against agreeing with that ill-bred little cur, and the rest of this job-lot. He had an impulse to get up and walk out, saying : " Settle it your own way. Good-morning."

" It seems, sir," Gentleman Fox was saying, " that we're all agreed to guilty, except yourself. If you will allow me, I don't see how you can go behind what the prisoner himself admitted."

Thus brought up to the very guns, Mr. Bosengate, red in the face, thrust his hands deep into the side pocket of his tunic, and, staring straight before him, said :

" Very well ; on condition we recommend him to mercy."

" What do you say, gentlemen ; shall we recommend him to mercy ? "

" 'Ear, 'ear ! " burst from the commercial traveller, and from the chemist came the murmur :

"No harm in that."

"Well, I think there is. They shoot deserters at the front, and we let this fellow off. I'd hang the cur."

Mr. Bosengate stared at that little wire-haired brute. "Haven't you *any* feeling for others?" he wanted to say. "Can't you see that this poor devil suffers tortures?" But the sheer impossibility of doing this before ten other men brought a slight sweat out on his face and hands; and in agitation he smote the table a blow with his fist. The effect was instantaneous. Everybody looked at the wire-haired man, as if saying: "Yes, you've gone a bit too far there!" The "little brute" stood it for a moment, then muttered surlily:

"Well, commend 'im to mercy if you like; I don't care."

"That's right; they never pay any attention to it," said the grey-haired man winking heartily. And Mr. Bosengate filed back with the others into court.

But when from the jury box his eyes fell once more on the hare-eyed figure in the dock, he had his worst moment yet. Why should this poor wretch suffer so—for no fault, no fault; while he, and these others, and that snapping counsel, and the Cæsar-like judge up there, went off to their women and their homes, blithe as bees, and probably never thought of him again? And suddenly he was conscious of the judge's voice:

"You will go back to your regiment, and endeavour to serve your country with better spirit. You may thank the jury that you are not sent to prison, and your good fortune that you were not at the front when you tried to commit this cowardly act. You are lucky to be alive."

A policeman pulled the little soldier by the arm;

his drab figure with eyes fixed and lustreless, passed down and away. From his very soul Mr. Bosengate wanted to lean out and say: "Cheer up, cheer up! I understand."

It was nearly ten o'clock that evening before he reached home, motoring back from the route march. His physical tiredness was abated, for he had partaken of a snack and a whisky and soda at the hotel; but mentally he was in curious mood. His body felt appeased, his spirit hungry. To-night he had a yearning, not for his wife's kisses, but for her understanding. He wanted to go to her and say: 'I've learnt a lot to-day—found out things I never thought of. Life's a wonderful thing, Kate, a thing one can't live all to oneself; a thing one shares with everybody, so that when another suffers, one suffers too. It's come to me that what one *has* doesn't matter a bit—it's what one does, and how one sympathises with other people. It came to me in the most extraordinary vivid way, when I was on that jury, watching that poor little rat of a soldier in his trap; it's the first time I've ever felt—the—the spirit of Christ, you know. It's a wonderful thing, Kate—wonderful! We haven't been close—really close, you and I, so that we each understand what the other is feeling. It's all in that, you know; understanding—sympathy—it's priceless. When I saw that poor little devil taken down and sent back to his regiment to begin his sorrows all over again—wanting his wife, thinking and thinking of her just as you know I'd be thinking and wanting you, I felt what an awful outside sort of life we lead, never telling each other what we really think and feel, never being really close. I daresay that little chap and his wife keep nothing from each other—live each other's

lives. That's what *we* ought to do. Let's get to feeling that what really matters is—understanding and loving, and not only just saying it as we all do; as those fellows on the jury with me do, and even that poor devil of a judge—what an awful life judging one's fellow-creatures! When I left that poor little Tommy this morning, and ever since, I've longed to get back here quietly to you and tell you about it, and make a beginning. There's something wonderful in this, and I want you to feel it as I do, because you mean such a lot to me.'

This was what he wanted to say to his wife, not touching, or kissing her, just looking into her eyes, watching them soften and glow as they surely must, catching the infection of his new ardour. And he felt unsteady, fearfully unsteady with the desire to say it all as it should be said: swiftly, quietly, with the truth and fervour of his feeling.

The hall was not lit up, for daylight still lingered under the new arrangement. He went towards the drawing-room, but from the very door shied off to his study and stood irresolute under the picture of a "Man catching a flea" (Dutch school), which had come down to him from his father. The governess would be in there with his wife! He must wait. Essential to go straight to Kathleen and pour it all out, or he would never do it. He felt as nervous as an undergraduate going up for his *vivâ voce*. This thing was so big, so astoundingly and unexpectedly important. He was suddenly afraid of his wife, afraid of her coolness and her grace, and that something Japanese about her—of all those attributes he had been accustomed to admire most; afraid, as it were, of her attraction. He felt young to-night, almost boyish; would she see that he

was not really fifteen years older than herself, and she not really a part of his collection, of all the admirable appointments of his home ; but a companion spirit to one who wanted a companion badly. In this agitation of his soul he could keep still no more than he could last night in the agitation of his senses ; and he wandered into the dining-room. A dainty supper was set out there, sandwiches, and cake, whisky and the cigarettes—even an early peach. Mr. Bosen-gate looked at this peach with sorrow rather than disgust. The perfection of it was of a piece with all that had gone before this new and sudden feeling. Its delicious bloom seemed to heighten his perception of the hedge around him, that hedge of the things he so enjoyed, carefully planted and tended these many years. He passed it by uneaten, and went to the window. Out there all was darkening, the fountain, the lime tree, the flower-beds, and the fields below, with the Jersey cows who would come to your call ; darkening slowly, losing form, blurring into soft blackness, vanishing, but there none the less—all there—the hedge of his possessions. He heard the door of the drawing-room open, the voices of his wife and the governess in the hall, going up to bed. If only they didn't look in here ! If only—— ! The voices ceased. He was safe now—had but to follow in a few minutes, to make sure of Kathleen alone. He turned round and stared down the length of the dark dining-room, over the rosewood table, to where in the mirror above the sideboard at the far end, his figure bathed, a stain, a mere blurred shadow ; he made his way down to it along the table edge, and stood before himself as close as he could get. His throat and the roof of his mouth felt dry with nervousness ; he put out his

finger and touched his face in the glass. 'You're an ass!' he thought. 'Pull yourself together, and get it over. She will see; of course she will!' He swallowed, smoothed his moustache, and walked out. Going up the stairs, his heart beat painfully; but he was in for it now, and marched straight into her room.

Dressed only in a loose blue wrapper, she was brushing her dark hair before the glass. Mr. Bosen-gate went up to her and stood there silent, looking down. The words he had thought of were like a swarm of bees buzzing in his head, yet not one would fly from between his lips. His wife went on brushing her hair under the light which shone on her polished elbows. She looked up at him from beneath one lifted eyebrow.

"Well, dear—tired?"

With a sort of vehemence the single word "No" passed out. A faint, a quizzical smile flitted over her face; she shrugged her shoulders ever so gently. That gesture—he had seen it before! And in desperate desire to make her understand, he put his hand on her lifted arm.

"Kathleen, stop—listen to me!" His fingers tightened in his agitation and eagerness to make his great discovery known. But before he could get out a word he became conscious of that cool round arm, conscious of her eyes half-closed, sliding round at him, of her half-smiling lips, of her neck under the wrapper. And he stammered:

"I want—I must—Kathleen, I——"

She lifted her shoulders again in that little shrug. "Yes—I know; all right!"

A wave of heat and shame, and of God knows what

came over Mr. Bosengate ; he fell on his knees and pressed his forehead to her arm ; and he was silent, more silent than the grave. Nothing—nothing came from him but two long sighs. Suddenly he felt her hand stroke his cheek—compassionately, it seemed to him. She made a little movement towards him ; her lips met his, and he remembered nothing but that . . .

In his own room Mr. Bosengate sat at his wide-open window, smoking a cigarette ; there was no light. Moths went past, the moon was creeping up. He sat very calm, puffing the smoke out into the night air. Curious thing—life ! Curious world ! Curious forces in it—making one do the opposite of what one wished ; always—always making one do the opposite, it seemed ! The furtive light from that creeping moon was getting hold of things down there, stealing in among the boughs of the trees. ‘ There’s something ironical,’ he thought, ‘ which walks about. Things don’t come off as you think they will. I meant, I tried—but one doesn’t change like that all of a sudden, it seems. Fact, is, life’s too big a thing for one ! All the same, I’m not the man I was yesterday—not quite ! ’ He closed his eyes, and in one of those flashes of vision which come when the senses are at rest, he saw himself as it were far down below—down on the floor of a street narrow as a grave, high as a mountain, a deep dark slit of a street—walking down there, a black midget of a fellow, among other black midgets—his wife, and the little soldier, the judge, and those jury chaps—*fantoques* straight up on their tiny feet, wandering down there in that dark, infinitely tall, and narrow street. ‘ Too much for one ! ’ he thought ; ‘ Too high for one—no getting on top of it. We’ve got to be kind, and help

one another, and not expect too much, and not think too much. That's—all!' And, squeezing out his cigarette, he took six deep breaths of the night air, and got into bed.

1916.

INDIAN SUMMER OF A FORSYTE

/

“ And summer’s lease hath all too short a date.”

SHAKESPEARE

ON the last day of May in the early 'nineties, about six o'clock of the evening, old Jolyon Forsyte sat under the oak tree before the terrace of his house at Robin Hill. He was waiting for the midges to bite him, before abandoning the glory of the afternoon. His thin brown hand, where blue veins stood out, held the end of a cigar in its tapering, long-nailed fingers—a pointed polished nail had survived with him from those earlier Victorian days when to touch nothing, even with the tips of the fingers, had been so distinguished. His domed forehead, great white moustache, lean cheeks, and long lean jaw were covered from the westering sunshine by an old brown Panama hat. His legs were crossed; in all his attitude was serenity and a kind of elegance, as of an old man who every morning put eau de Cologne upon his silk handkerchief. At his feet lay a woolly black-and-white dog trying to be a Pomeranian—the dog Balthasar between whom and old Jolyon primal aversion had changed into attachment with the years. Close to his chair was a swing, and on the swing was seated one of Holly's dolls—called 'Duffer Alice'—with her body fallen over her legs and her doleful nose buried in a black petticoat. She was never out of disgrace, so it did not matter to her how she sat. Below the oak tree the lawn dipped down a bank, stretched to the fernery, and, beyond that refinement, became fields, dropping to the pond, the coppice, and that prospect—'Fine,

remarkable'—at which Swithin Forsyte, from under this very tree, had stared four years ago when he drove down with Irene to look at the house. Old Jolyon had heard of his brother's exploit—that drive which had become quite celebrated on Forsyte 'Change.' Swithin ! And the fellow had gone and died, last November, at the age of only seventy-nine, renewing the doubt whether Forsytes could live for ever, which had first arisen when Aunt Ann passed away. Died ! and left only Jolyon and James, Roger and Nicholas and Timothy—Julia and Hester ! And old Jolyon thought : 'Eighty-four ! I don't feel it—except when I get that pain.'

His memory went searching. He had not felt his age since he had bought his nephew Soames's ill-starred house and settled into it here at Robin Hill nearly three years ago. It was as if he had been getting younger every spring, living in the country with his son and his grandchildren—June, and the little ones of the second marriage, Jolly and Holly ; living down here out of the racket of London and the cackle of Forsyte 'Change,' free of his Boards, in a delicious atmosphere of no work and all play, with plenty of occupation in the perfecting and mellowing of the house and its twenty acres, and in ministering to the whims of Holly and Jolly. All the knots and crankiness, which had gathered in his heart during that long and tragic business of June, Soames, Irene his wife, and poor young Bosinney, had been smoothed out. Even June had thrown off her melancholy at last—witness this travel in Spain she was taking now with her father and her step-mother. Curiously perfect peace was left by their departure ; blissful, yet blank, because his son was not there. Jo was never anything but a

comfort and a pleasure to him nowadays—an amiable chap; but women, somehow—even the best—got a little on one's nerves, unless of course one admired them.

Far-off a cuckoo called; a wood pigeon was cooing from the first elm tree in the field, and how the daisies and buttercups had sprung up after the last mowing! The wind had got into the sou'-west, too—a delicious air, sappy! He pushed his hat back and let the sun fall on his chin and cheek. Somehow, to-day, he wanted company—wanted a pretty face to look at. People treated the old as if they wanted nothing. And with the un-Forsytean philosophy which ever intruded on his soul, he thought: 'One's never had enough! With a foot in the grave one'll want something, I shouldn't be surprised!' Down here—away from the exigencies of affairs—his grandchildren, and the flowers, trees, birds of his little domain, to say nothing of sun and moon and stars above them, said, 'Open, sesame,' to him day and night. And sesame had opened—how much, perhaps, he did not know. He had always been responsive to what they had begun to call 'Nature,' genuinely, almost religiously responsive, though he had never lost his habit of calling a sunset a sunset and a view a view, however deeply they might move him. But nowadays Nature actually made him ache, he appreciated it so. Every one of these calm, bright, lengthening days, with Holly's hand in his, and the dog Balthasar in front looking studiously for what he never found, he would stroll, watching the roses open, fruit budding on the walls, sunlight brightening the oak leaves and saplings in the coppice, watching the water-lily leaves unfold and glisten, and the silvery young corn of the one wheatfield; listening to the

starlings and skylarks, and the Alderney cows chewing the cud, flicking slow their tufted tails ; and every one of these fine days he ached a little from sheer love of it all, feeling perhaps, deep down, that he had not very much longer to enjoy it. The thought that some day—perhaps not ten years hence, perhaps not five—all this world would be taken away from him, before he had exhausted his powers of loving it, seemed to him in the nature of an injustice, brooding over his horizon. If anything came after this life, it wouldn't be what he wanted ; not Robin Hill, and flowers and birds and pretty faces—too few, even now, of those about him ! With the years his dislike of humbug had increased ; the orthodoxy he had worn in the 'sixties, as he had worn side-whiskers out of sheer exuberance, had long dropped off, leaving him reverent before three things alone—beauty, upright conduct, and the sense of property ; and the greatest of these now was beauty. He had always had wide interests, and, indeed could still read *The Times*, but he was liable at any moment to put it down if he heard a blackbird sing. Upright conduct, property—somehow, they were tiring ; the blackbirds and the sunsets never tired him, only gave him an uneasy feeling that he could not get enough of them. Staring into the stilly radiance of the early evening and at the little gold and white flowers on the lawn, a thought came to him : This weather was like the music of 'Orfeo,' which he had recently heard at Covent Garden. A beautiful opera, not like Meyerbeer, nor even quite Mozart, but, in its way, perhaps even more lovely ; something classical and of the Golden Age about it, chaste and mellow, and the Ravogli 'almost worthy of the old days'—highest praise he could bestow. The yearning of Orpheus

for the beauty he was losing, for his love going down to Hades, as in life love and beauty did go—the yearning which sang and throbbed through the golden music, stirred also in the lingering beauty of the world that evening. And with the tip of his cork-soled, elastic-sided boot he involuntarily stirred the ribs of the dog Balthasar, causing the animal to wake and attack his fleas; for though he was supposed to have none, nothing could persuade him of the fact. When he had finished, he rubbed the place he had been scratching against his master's calf, and settled down again with his chin over the instep of the disturbing boot. And into old Jolyon's mind came a sudden recollection—a face he had seen at that opera three weeks ago—Irene, the wife of his precious nephew Soames, that man of property! Though he had not met her since the day of the "At Home" in his old house at Stanhope Gate, which celebrated his granddaughter June's ill-starred engagement to young Bosinney, he had remembered her at once, for he had always admired her—a very pretty creature. After the death of young Bosinney, whose mistress she had so reprehensibly become, he had heard that she had left Soames at once. Goodness only knew what she had been doing since. That sight of her face—a side-view—in the row in front, had been literally the only reminder these three years that she was still alive. No one ever spoke of her. And yet Jo had told him something once—something which had upset him completely. The boy had got it from George Forsyte, he believed, who had seen Bosinney in the fog the day he was run over—something which explained the young fellow's distress—an act of Soames towards his wife—a shocking act. Jo had seen her, too, that afternoon,

after the news was out, seen her for a moment, and his description had always lingered in old Jolyon's mind—'wild and lost' he had called her. And next day June had gone there—bottled up her feelings and gone there, and the maid had cried and told her how her mistress had slipped out in the night and vanished. A tragic business altogether! One thing was certain—Soames had never been able to lay hands on her again. And he was living at Brighton, and journeying up and down—a fitting fate, the man of property! For when he once took a dislike to anyone—as he had to his nephew—old Jolyon never got over it. He remembered still the sense of relief with which he had heard the news of Irene's disappearance. It had been shocking to think of her a prisoner in that house to which she must have wandered back, when Jo saw her, wandered back for a moment—like a wounded animal to its hole after seeing that news, 'Tragic death of an Architect,' in the street. Her face had struck him very much the other night—more beautiful than he had remembered, but like a mask, with something going on beneath it. A young woman still—twenty-eight perhaps. Ah, well! Very likely she had another lover by now. But at this subversive thought—for married women should never love, once, even, had been too much—his instep rose, and with it the dog Balthazar's head. The sagacious animal stood up and looked into old Jolyon's face. "Walk?" he seemed to say; and old Jolyon answered: "Come on, old chap!"

Slowly, as was their wont, they crossed among the constellations of buttercups and daises, and entered the fernery. This feature, where very little grew as yet, had been judiciously dropped below the level of the lawn so that it might come up again on the level of

the other lawn and give the impression of irregularity, so important in horticulture. Its rocks and earth were beloved of the dog Balthasar, who sometimes found a mole there. Old Jolyon made a point of passing through it because, though it was not beautiful, he intended that it should be, some day, and he would think: 'I must get Varr to come down and look at it; he's better than Beech.' For plants, like houses and human complaints, required the best expert consideration. It was inhabited by snails, and if accompanied by his grandchildren, he would point to one and tell them the story of the little boy who said: 'Have plummets got leggers, Mother?' 'No, sonny.' 'Then darned if I haven't been and swallowed a snileybob.' And when they skipped and clutched his hand, thinking of the snileybob going down the little boy's 'red lane,' his eyes would twinkle. Emerging from the fernery, he opened the wicket gate, which just there led into the first field, a large and park-like area, out of which, within brick walls, the vegetable garden had been carved. Old Jolyon avoided this, which did not suit his mood, and made down the hill towards the pond. Balthasar, who knew a water-rat or two, gambolled in front, at the gait which marks an oldish dog who takes the same walk every day. Arrived at the edge, old Jolyon stood, noting another water-lily opened since yesterday; he would show it to Holly to-morrow, when 'his little sweet' had got over the upset which had followed on her eating a tomato at lunch—her little arrangements were very delicate. Now that Jolly had gone to school—his first term—Holly was with him nearly all day long, and he missed her badly. He felt that pain too, which often bothered him now, a little dragging at his left side.

He looked back up the hill. Really, poor young Bosinney had made an uncommonly good job of the house; he would have done very well for himself if he had lived! And where was he now? Perhaps, still haunting this, the site of his last work, of his tragic love affair. Or was Philip Bosinney's spirit diffused in the general? Who could say? That dog was getting his legs muddy! And he moved towards the coppice. There had been the most delightful lot of bluebells, and he knew where some still lingered like little patches of sky fallen in between the trees, away out of the sun. He passed the cow- and hen-houses there installed, and pursued a thin path into the thick of the saplings, making for one of those bluebell plots. Balthasar, preceding him once more, uttered a low growl. Old Jolyon stirred him with his foot, but the dog remained motionless, just where there was no room to pass, and the hair rose slowly along the centre of his woolly back. Whether from the growl and the look of the dog's stivered hair, or from the sensation which a man feels in a wood, old Jolyon also felt something move along his spine. And then the path turned, and there was an old mossy log, and on it a woman sitting. Her face was turned away, and he had just time to think: 'She's trespassing—I must have a board put up!' before she turned. Powers above! The face he had seen at the opera—the very woman he had just been thinking of! In that confused moment he saw things blurred as if a spirit—queer effect—the slant of sunlight perhaps on her violet-grey frock! And then she rose and stood smiling, her head a little to one side. Old Jolyon thought: 'How pretty she is!' She did not speak, neither did he; and he realised why with a certain admiration. She was here no doubt because

of some memory, and did not mean to try and get out of it by vulgar explanation.

"Don't let that dog touch your frock," he said ; "he's got wet feet. Come here, you !"

But the dog Balthasar went on towards the visitor, who put her hand down and stroked his head. Old Jolyon said quickly :

"I saw you at the opera the other night ; you didn't notice me."

"Oh, yes ! I did."

He felt a subtle flattery in that, as though she had added : "Do you think one could miss seeing you ?"

"They're all in Spain," he remarked abruptly. "I'm alone ; I drove up for the opera. The Ravogli's good. Have you seen the cow-houses ?"

In a situation so charged with mystery and something very like emotion he moved instinctively towards that bit of property, and she moved beside him. Her figure swayed faintly, like the best kind of French figures ; her dress, too, was a sort of French grey. He noticed two or three silver threads in her amber-coloured hair, strange hair with those dark eyes of hers, and that creamy-pale face. A sudden sidelong look from the velvety brown eyes disturbed him. It seemed to come from deep and far, from another world almost, or at all events from someone not living very much in this. And he said mechanically :

"Where are you living now ?"

"I have a little flat in Chelsea."

He did not want to hear what she was doing, did not want to hear anything ; but the perverse word came out :

"Alone ?"

She nodded. It was a relief to know that. And it

came into his mind that, but for a twist of fate, she would have been mistress of this coppice, showing those cow-houses to him, a visitor.

"All Alderneys," he muttered; "they give the best milk. This one's a pretty creature. Woa, Myrtle!"

The fawn-coloured cow, with eyes as soft and brown as Irene's own, was standing absolutely still, not having long been milked. She looked round at them out of the corner of those lustrous, mild, cynical eyes, and from her grey lips a little dribble of saliva threaded its way towards the straw. The scent of hay and vanilla and ammonia rose in the dim light of the cool cow-house; and old Jolyon said:

"You must come up and have some dinner with me. I'll send you home in the carriage."

He perceived a struggle going on within her; natural, no doubt, with her memories. But he wanted her company; a pretty face, a charming figure, beauty! He had been alone all the afternoon. Perhaps his eyes were wistful, for she answered: "Thank you, Uncle Jolyon. I should like to."

He rubbed his hands, and said:

"Capital! Let's go up, then!" And, preceded by the dog Balthazar, they ascended through the field. The sun was almost level in their faces now, and he could see, not only those silver threads, but little lines, just deep enough to stamp her beauty with a coin-like fineness—the special look of life unshared with others. 'I'll take her in by the terrace,' he thought: 'I won't make a common visitor of her.'

"What do you do all day?" he said.

"Teach music; I have another interest, too."

"Work!" said old Jolyon, picking up the doll from

off the swing, and smoothing its black petticoat. "Nothing like it, is there? I don't do any now. I'm getting on. What interest is that?"

"Trying to help women who've come to grief." Old Jolyon did not quite understand. "To grief?" he repeated; then realised with a shock that she meant exactly what he would have meant himself if he had used that expression. Assisting the Magdalenes of London! What a weird and terrifying interest! And, curiosity overcoming his natural shrinking, he asked:

"Why? What do you do for them?"

"Not much. I've no money to spare. I can only give sympathy and food sometimes."

Involuntarily old Jolyon's hand sought his purse. He said hastily: "How d'you get hold of them?"

"I go to a hospital."

"A hospital! Phew!"

"What hurts me most is that once they nearly all had some sort of beauty."

Old Jolyon straightened the doll. "Beauty!" he ejaculated: "Ha! Yes! A sad business!" and he moved towards the house. Through a French window, under sunblinds not yet drawn up, he preceded her into the room where he was wont to study *The Times* and the sheets of an agricultural magazine, with huge illustrations of mangold wurzels, and the like, which provided Holly with material for her paint brush.

"Dinner's in half an hour. You'd like to wash your hands! I'll take you to June's room."

He saw her looking round eagerly; what changes since she had last visited this house with her husband, or her lover, or both perhaps—he did not know, could not say! All that was dark, and he wished

to leave it so. But what changes! And in the hall he said:

"My boy Jo's a painter, you know. He's got a lot of taste. It isn't mine, of course, but I've let him have his way."

She was standing very still, her eyes roaming through the hall and music room, as it now was—all thrown into one, under the great skylight. Old Jolyon had an odd impression of her. Was she trying to conjure somebody from the shades of that space where the colouring was all pearl-grey and silver? He would have had gold himself; more lively and solid. But Jo had French tastes, and it had come out shadowy like that, with an effect as of the fume of cigarettes the chap was always smoking, broken here and there by a little blaze of blue or crimson colour. It was not *his* dream! Mentally he had hung this space with those gold-framed masterpieces of still and stiller life which he had bought in days when quantity was precious. And now where were they? Sold for a song! For that something which made him, alone among Forsytes, move with the times had warned him against the struggle to retain them. But in his study he still had 'Dutch Fishing Boats at Sunset.'

He began to mount the stairs with her, slowly, for he felt his side.

"These are the bathrooms," he said, "and other arrangements. I've had them tiled. The nurseries are along there. And this is Jo's and his wife's. They all communicate. But you remember, I expect."

Irene nodded. They passed on, up the gallery and entered a large room with a small bed, and several windows.

"This is mine," he said. The walls were covered

with the photographs of children, and water-colour sketches, and he added doubtfully :

"These are Jo's. The view's first-rate. You can see the Grand Stand at Epsom in clear weather."

The sun was down now, behind the house, and over the 'prospect' a luminous haze had settled, emanation of the long and prosperous day. Few houses showed, but fields and trees faintly glistened, away to a loom of downs.

"The country's changing," he said abruptly, "but there it'll be when we're all gone. Look at those thrushes—the birds are sweet here in the mornings. I'm glad to have washed my hands of London."

Her face was close to the window pane, and he was struck by its mournful look. 'Wish I could make her look happy!' he thought. 'A pretty face, but sad!' And taking up his can of hot water he went out into the gallery.

"This is June's room," he said, opening the next door and putting the can down; "I think you'll find everything." And closing the door behind her he went back to his own room. Brushing his hair with his great ebony brushes, and dabbing his forehead with eau de Cologne, he mused. She had come so strangely—a sort of visitation, mysterious, even romantic, as if his desire for company, for beauty, had been fulfilled by—whatever it was which fulfilled that sort of thing. And before the mirror he straightened his still upright figure, passed the brushes over his great white moustache, touched up his eyebrows with eau de Cologne, and rang the bell.

"I forgot to let them know that I have a lady to dinner with me. Let cook do something extra, and tell Beacon to have the landau and pair at half-past

ten to drive her back to Town ———. Is Miss Holly asleep ? ”

The maid thought not. And old Jolyon, passing down the gallery, stole on tiptoe towards the nursery, and opened the door whose hinges he kept specially oiled that he might slip in and out in the evenings without being heard.

But Holly *was* asleep, and lay like a miniature Madonna, of that type which the old painters could not tell from Venus, when they had completed her. Her long dark lashes clung to her cheeks ; on her face was perfect peace—her little arrangements were evidently all right again. And old Jolyon, in the twilight of the room, stood adoring her ! It was so charming, solemn, and loving—that little face. He had more than his share of the blessed capacity of living again in the young. They were to him his future life—all of a future life that his fundamental pagan sanity perhaps admitted. There she was with everything before her, and his blood—some of it—in her tiny veins. There she was, his little companion, to be made as happy as ever he could make her, so that she knew nothing but love. His heart swelled, and he went out, stifling the sound of his patent leather boots. In the corridor an eccentric notion attacked him : To think that children should come to that which Irene had told him she was helping ! Women who were all, once, little things like this one sleeping there ! ‘ I must give her a cheque ! ’ he mused ; ‘ can’t bear to think of them ! ’ They had never borne reflecting on, those poor outcasts ; wounding too deeply the core of true refinement hidden under layers of conformity to the sense of property—wounding too grievously the deepest thing in him—a love of beauty which could give

him, even now, a flutter of the heart, thinking of his evening in the society of a pretty woman. And he went downstairs, through the swing-doors, to the back regions. There, in the wine-cellar, was a hock worth at least two pounds a bottle, a Steinberg Cabinet, better than any Johannisberg that ever went down throat ; a wine of perfect bouquet, sweet as a nectarine—nectar indeed ! He got a bottle out, handling it like a baby, and holding it level to the light, to look. Enshrined in its coat of dust, that mellow-coloured, slender-necked bottle gave him deep pleasure. Three years to settle down again since the move from Town—ought to be in prime condition ! Thirty-five years ago he had bought it—thank God he had kept his palate, and earned the right to drink it. She would appreciate this ; not a spice of acidity in a dozen. He wiped the bottle, drew the cork with his own hands, put his nose down, inhaled its perfume, and went back to the music room.

Irene was standing by the piano ; she had taken off her hat and a lace scarf she had been wearing, so that her amber-coloured hair was visible, and the pallor of her neck. In her grey frock she made a pretty picture for old Jolyon, against the rosewood of the piano.

He gave her his arm, and solemnly they went. The room, which had been designed to enable twenty-four people to dine in comfort, held now but a little round table. In his present solitude the big dining-table oppressed old Jolyon ; he had caused it to be removed till his son came back. Here in the company of two really good copies of Raphael Madonnas he was wont to dine alone. It was the only disconsolate hour of his day, this summer weather. He had never been a large eater, like that great chap Swithin, or Sylvanus

Heythorp, or Anthony Thornworthy, those cronies of past times ; and to dine alone, overlooked by the Madonnas, was to him but a sorrowful occupation, which he got through quickly, that he might come to the more spiritual enjoyment of his coffee and cigar. But this evening was a different matter ! His eyes twinkled at her across the little table, and he spoke of Italy and Switzerland, telling her stories of his travels there, and other experiences which he could no longer recount to his son and grand-daughter because they knew them. This fresh audience was precious to him ; he had never become one of those old men who ramble round and round the fields of reminiscence. Himself quickly fatigued by the insensitive, he instinctively avoided fatiguing others, and his natural flirtatiousness towards beauty guarded him specially in his relations with a woman. He would have liked to draw her out, but though she murmured and smiled and seemed to be enjoying what he told her, he remained conscious of that mysterious remoteness which constituted half her fascination. He could not bear women who threw their shoulders and eyes at you, and chattered away ; or hard-mouthed women who laid down the law and knew more than you did. There was only one quality in a woman that appealed to him—charm ; and the quieter it was, the more he liked it. And this one had charm, shadowy as afternoon sunlight on those Italian hills and valleys he had loved. The feeling, too, that she was, as it were, apart, cloistered, made her seem nearer to himself, a strangely desirable companion. When a man is very old and quite out of the running, he loves to feel secure from the rivalries of youth, for he would still be first in the heart of beauty. And he drank his hock, and watched

her lips, and felt nearly young. But the dog Balthasar lay watching her lips too, and despising in his heart the interruptions of their talk, and the tilting of those greenish glasses full of a golden fluid which was distasteful to him.

The light was just failing when they went back into the music room. And, cigar in mouth, old Jolyon said :

“ Play me some Chopin.”

By the cigars they smoke, and the composers they love, ye shall know the texture of men souls. Old Jolyon could not bear a strong cigar or Wagner's music. He loved Beethoven and Mozart, Handel and Gluck, and Schumann, and, for some occult reason, the operas of Meyerbeer ; but of late years he had been seduced by Chopin, just as in painting he had succumbed to Botticelli. In yielding to these tastes he had been conscious of divergence from the standard of the Golden Age. Their poetry was not that of Milton and Byron and Tennyson ; of Raphael and Titian ; Mozart and Beethoven. It was, as it were, behind a veil ; their poetry hit no one in the face, but slipped its fingers under the ribs and turned and twisted, and melted up the heart. And, never certain that this was healthy, he did not care a rap so long as he could see the pictures of the one or hear the music of the other.

Irene sat down at the piano under the electric lamp festooned with pearl-grey, and old Jolyon, in an arm-chair, whence he could see her, crossed his legs and drew slowly at his cigar. She sat a few moments with her hands on the keys, evidently searching her mind for what to give him. Then she began, and within old Jolyon there arose a sorrowful pleasure, not quite like

anything else in the world. He fell slowly into a trance, interrupted only by the movement of his hand taking the cigar out of his mouth at long intervals, and replacing it. She was there, and the hock within him, and the scent of tobacco ; but there, too, was a world of sunshine lingering into moonlight, and pools with storks upon them, and bluish trees above, glowing with blurs of wine-red roses, and fields of lavender where milk-white cows were grazing, and a woman all shadowy, with dark eyes and a white neck, smiled, holding out her arms ; and through air which was like music a star dropped, and was caught on a cow's horn. He opened his eyes. Beautiful piece ; she played well—the touch of an angel ! And he closed them again. He felt miraculously sad and happy, as one does, standing under a lime tree in full honey flower. Not live one's own life again, but just stand there and bask in the smile of a woman's eyes, and enjoy the bouquet ! And he jerked his hand ; the dog Balthasar had reached up and licked it.

" Beautiful ! " he said : " Go on—more Chopin ! "

She began to play again. This time the resemblance between her and ' Chopin ' struck him. The swaying he had noticed in her walk was in her playing too, and the Nocturne she had chosen, and the soft darkness of her eyes, the light on her hair, as of moonlight from a golden moon. Seductive, yes ; but nothing of Delilah in her or in that music. A long blue spiral from his cigar ascended and dispersed. ' So we go out ! ' he thought. ' No more beauty ! Nothing ? '

Again Irene stopped.

" Would you like some Gluck ? " she said. " He used to write his music in a sunlit garden, with a bottle of Rhine wine beside him."

" Ah ! yes. Let's have ' Orfeo.' " And off he went once more. Round about him now were fields of gold and silver flowers, white forms swaying in the sunlight, bright birds flying to and fro. It was all summer. Lingering waves of sweetness and regret flooded his soul. Some cigar ash dropped, and taking out a silk handkerchief to brush it off, he inhaled a mingled scent of snuff and eau de Cologne. ' Ah ! ' he thought, ' Indian summer—that's all ! ' And he said : " You haven't played me ' Che faro.' "

She did not answer ; did not move. He was conscious of something—some strange upset. Suddenly he saw her rise and turn away, and a pang of remorse shot through him. What a fool ! What a clumsy chap ! Like Orpheus, she of course—she too was looking for her lost one in this hall of memory ! And, disturbed to the heart, he got up from his chair. She had gone to the great window at the far end. Gingerly he followed. Her hands were folded over her breast ; he could just see her cheek, very white. And, quite emotionalised, he said : " There, there, my love ! " The words had escaped him mechanically, for they were those he used to Holly when she had a pain, but their effect was instantaneously distressing. She raised her arms, covered her face with them, and wept.

Old Jolyon stood gazing at her with eyes very deep from age. The passionate shame she seemed feeling at her abandonment, so unlike the control and quietude of her whole presence, was as if she had never before broken down in the presence of another being.

" There, there—there, there ! " he murmured ; and putting his hand out reverently, touched her. She turned, and leaned the arms which covered her face against him. Old Jolyon stood very still, keeping one

thin hand on her shoulder. Poor thing ! Let her cry her heart out—it would do her good ! And the dog Balthasar, puzzled, sat down on his stern to examine them.

The window was still open, the curtains had not been drawn, the last of daylight from without mingled with faint intrusion from the lamp within ; there was a scent of new-mown grass. With the wisdom of a long life, old Jolyon did not speak. Even grief sobs itself out in time ; only Time is good for sorrow—Time who sees the passing of each mood, each emotion in turn ; Time the layer-to-rest. The old knew that. There came into his mind the words : ‘ As panteth the hart after cooling streams ’—but they were of no use to him. Then he was conscious of a scent of violets, and knew she was drying her eyes. He put his chin forward, pressed his moustache against her forehead, and felt her shake with a quivering of her whole body, as of a tree which shakes itself free of raindrops. She put his hand to her lips, as if saying : ‘ All over now ! Forgive me ! ’

The kiss filled him with strange comfort ; he led her back to where she had been so upset. And the dog Balthasar, following, laid the bone of one of the cutlets they had eaten at their feet.

Anxious to obliterate the memory of that emotion, he could think of nothing better than to exhibit china ; and moving with her slowly from cabinet to cabinet, he kept taking up bits of Dresden and Lowestoft and Chelsea, turning them round and round with his thin, veined hands, whose skin, faintly freckled, had such an aged look. ~

“ I bought this at Jobson’s,” he would say ; “ cost me thirty pounds. It’s very old. That dog leaves

his bones all over the place. This old 'ship-bowl' I picked up at the sale when that precious rip, the Marquis, came to grief. But you don't remember. Here's a nice piece of Chelsea. Now, what would you say *this* was?" And he was comforted, feeling that, with her taste, she was taking a real interest in these things; for, after all, there is nothing more composing to the nerves than a doubtful piece of china.

When the crunch of the carriage wheels was heard at last, he said:

"You must come again; you must come to lunch, then I can show you these by daylight, and my little sweet—she's a dear little thing. This dog seems to have taken a fancy to you."

For Balthasar, feeling that she was about to leave, was rubbing his side against her leg. Going out under the porch with her, he said:

"He'll get you up in an hour and a quarter. Take this for your *protégées*," and he slipped a cheque for fifty pounds into her hand. He saw her brightened eyes, and heard her murmur: "Oh! Uncle Jolyon!" and a real throb of pleasure went through him. That meant one or two poor creatures helped a little, and it meant that she would come again. He put his hand in at the window and grasped hers once more. The carriage rolled away. He stood looking at the moon and the shadows of the trees, and thought: "It's a sweet night! She——!"

II

Two days of rain, and summer set in bland and sunny. Old Jolyon walked and talked with Holly. At first he felt taller and full of a new vigour; then he

felt restless. Almost every afternoon they would enter the coppice, and walk as far as the log. 'Well, she's not there!' he would think, 'of course not!' And he would feel a little shorter, and drag his feet walking up the hill home, with his hand clapped to his left side. Now and then the thought would move in him: 'Did she come—or did I dream it?' and he would stare at space, while the dog Balthasar stared at him. Of course she would not come again! He opened the letters from Spain with less excitement. They were not returning till July; he felt, oddly, that he could bear it. Every day at dinner he screwed up his eyes and looked at where she had sat. She was not there, so he unscrewed his eyes again.

On the seventh afternoon he thought: 'I must go up and get some boots.' He ordered Beacon, and set out. Passing from Putney towards Hyde Park he reflected: 'I might as well go to Chelsea and see her.' And he called out: "Just drive me to where you took that lady the other night." The coachman turned his broad red face, and his juicy lips answered: "The lady in grey, sir?"

"Yes, the lady in grey." What other ladies were there! Stodgy chap!

The carriage stopped before a small three-storied block of flats, standing a little back from the river. With a practised eye old Jolyon saw that they were cheap. 'I should think about sixty pound a year,' he mused; and, entering, he looked at the name-board. The name 'Forsyte' was not on it, but against 'First Floor, Flat C' were the words: 'Mrs. Irene Heron.' Ah! She had taken her maiden name again! And somehow this pleased him. He went upstairs slowly, feeling his side a little. He stood a

moment, before ringing, to lose the feeling of drag and fluttering there. She would not be in! And then—Boots! The thought was black. What did he want with boots at his age? He could not wear out all those he had.

“Your mistress at home?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Say Mr. Jolyon Forsyte.”

“Yes, sir, will you come this way?”

Old Jolyon followed a very little maid—not more than sixteen one would say—into a still smaller drawing-room where the sunblinds were drawn. It held a cottage piano and little else save a vague fragrance and good taste. He stood in the middle, with his top hat in his hand, and thought: ‘I expect she’s very badly off!’ There was a mirror above the fireplace, and he saw himself reflected. An old-looking chap! He heard a rustle, and turned round. She was so close that his moustache almost brushed her forehead, just under the threads of silver in her hair.

“I was driving up,” he said. “Thought I’d look in on you, and ask you how you got up the other night.”

And, seeing her smile, he felt suddenly relieved. She was really glad to see him, perhaps.

“Would you like to put on your hat and come for a drive in the Park?”

But while she was gone to put her hat on, he frowned. The Park! James and Emily! Mrs. Nicholas, or some other member of his precious family would be there very likely, prancing up and down. And they would go and wag their tongues about having seen him with her, afterwards. Better not! He did not wish to revive the echoes of the past on Forsyte ‘Change.

He removed a white hair from the lapel of his closely buttoned-up frock coat, and passed his hand over his cheeks, moustaches, and square chin. It felt very hollow there under the cheekbones. He had not been eating much lately—he had better get that little whippersnapper who attended Holly to give him a tonic. But she had come back and when they were in the carriage, he said :

“ Suppose we go and sit in Kensington Gardens instead ? ” and added with a twinkle : “ No prancing up and down there,” as if she had been in the secret of his thoughts.

Leaving the carriage, they entered those select precincts, and strolled towards the water.

“ You’ve gone back to your maiden name, I see,” he said : “ I’m not sorry.”

She slipped her hand under his arm : “ Has June forgiven me, Uncle Jolyon ? ”

He answered gently : “ Yes—yes ; of course, why not ? ”

“ And have you ? ”

“ I ? I forgave you as soon as I saw how the land really lay.” And perhaps he had ; his instinct had always been to forgive the beautiful.

She drew a deep breath. “ I never regretted—I couldn’t. Did you ever love very deeply, Uncle Jolyon ? ”

At that strange question old Jolyon stared before him. Had he ? He did not seem to remember that he ever had. But he did not like to say this to the young woman whose hand was touching his arm, whose life was suspended, as it were, by memory of a tragic love. And he thought : ‘ If I had met *you* when I was young, I—I might have made a fool of myself,

perhaps.' And a longing to escape in generalities beset him.

"Love's a queer thing," he said, "fatal thing often. It was the Greeks, wasn't it? made love into a goddess; they were right, I dare say, but then they lived in the Golden Age."

"Phil adored them."

Phil! The word jarred him, for suddenly—with his power to see all round a thing, he perceived why she was putting up with him like this. She wanted to talk about her lover! Well! If it was any pleasure to her! And he said: "Ah! There was a bit of the sculptor in him, I fancy."

"Yes. He loved balance and symmetry; he loved the whole-hearted way the Greeks gave themselves to art."

Balance! The chap had no balance at all, if he remembered; as for symmetry—clean-built enough he was, no doubt; but those queer eyes of his, and high cheek-bones—Symmetry?

"You're of the Golden Age, too, Uncle Jolyon."

Old Jolyon looked round at her. Was she chaffing him? No, her eyes were soft as velvet. Was she flattering him? But if so, why? There was nothing to be had out of an old chap like him.

"Phil thought so. He used to say: 'But I can never tell him that I admire him.'"

Ah! There it was again. Her dead lover; her desire to talk of him! And he pressed her arm, half resentful of those memories, half grateful, as if he recognised what a link they were between herself and him.

"He was a very talented young fellow," he murmured. "It's hot; I feel the heat nowadays. Let's sit down."

They took two chairs beneath a chestnut tree whose broad leaves covered them from the peaceful glory of the afternoon. A pleasure to sit there and watch her, and feel that she liked to be with him. And the wish to increase that liking, if he could, made him go on :

"I expect he showed you a side of him I never saw. He'd be at his best with you. His ideas of art were a little new—to me"—he had stifled the word 'fangled.'

"Yes. but he used to say you had a real sense of beauty." Old Jolyon thought: 'The devil he did!' but answered with a twinkle: "Well, I have, or I shouldn't be sitting here with you." She was fascinating when she smiled with her eyes, like that!

"He thought you had one of those hearts that never grow old. Phil had real insight."

He was not taken in by this flattery spoken out of the past, out of a longing to talk of her dead lover—not a bit; and yet it was precious to hear, because she pleased his eyes and a heart which—quite true!—had never grown old. Was that because—unlike her and her dead lover, he had never loved to desperation, had always kept his balance, his sense of symmetry. Well! It had left him the power, at eighty-four, to admire beauty. And he thought, 'If I were a painter or a sculptor! But I'm an old chap. Make hay while the sun shines.'

A couple with arms entwined crossed on the grass before them, at the edge of the shadow from their tree. The sunlight fell cruelly on their pale, squashed, unkempt young faces. "We're an ugly lot!" said old Jolyon suddenly. "It amazes me to see how—love triumphs over that."

"Love triumphs over everything!"

"The young think so," he muttered.

" Love has no age, no limit, and no death."

With that glow in her pale face, her breast heaving, her eyes so large and dark and soft, she looked like Venus come to life! But this extravagance brought instant reaction, and, twinkling, he said: " Well, if it had limits, we shouldn't be born; for by George! it's got a lot to put up with."

Then, removing his top-hat, he brushed it round with a cuff. The great clumsy thing heated his forehead; in these days he often got a rush of blood to the head—his circulation was not what it had been.

She still sat gazing straight out before her, and suddenly she murmured:

" It's strange enough that *I'm* alive."

Those words of Jo's ' Wild and lost ' came back to him.

" Ah!" he said: " my son saw you for a moment—that day."

" Was it your son? I heard a voice in the hall; I thought for a second it was—Phil."

Old Jolyon saw her lips tremble. She put her hand over them, took it away again, and went on calmly: " That night I went to the Embankment; a woman caught me by the dress. She told me about herself. When one knows what others suffer, one's ashamed."

" One of *those*?"

She nodded, and horror stirred within old Jolyon, the horror of one who has never known a struggle with desperation. Almost against his will he muttered: " Tell me, won't you?"

" I didn't care whether I lived or died. When you're like that, Fate ceases to want to kill you. She took care of me three days—she never left me. I had no money. That's why I do what I can for them, now."

But old Jolyon was thinking: 'No money!' What fate could compare with that? Every other was involved in it.

"I wish you had come to me," he said. "Why didn't you?" Irene did not answer.

"Because my name was Forsyte, I suppose? Or was it June who kept you away? How are you getting on now?" His eyes involuntarily swept her body. Perhaps even now she was——! And yet she wasn't thin—not really!

"Oh! I make just enough." The answer did not reassure him; he had lost confidence. And that fellow Soames! But his sense of justice stifled condemnation. No, she would certainly have died rather than take another penny from *him*. Soft as she looked, there must be strength in her somewhere—strength and fidelity. But what business had young Bosinney to have got run over and left her stranded like this!

"Well, you must come to me now," he said, "for anything you want, or I shall be quite cut up." And putting on his hat, he rose. "Let's go and get some tea. I told that lazy chap to put the horses up for an hour, and come for me at your place. We'll take a cab presently; I can't walk as I used to."

He enjoyed that stroll to the Kensington end of the gardens—the sound of her voice, the glancing of her eyes, the subtle beauty of a charming form moving beside him. He enjoyed their tea at Ruffel's in the High Street, and came out thence with a great box of chocolates swung on his little finger. He enjoyed the drive back to Chelsea in a hansom, smoking his cigar. She had promised to come down next Sunday and play to him again, and already in thought he was plucking carnations and early roses for her to carry back to

town. It was a pleasure to give her a little pleasure, if it *were* pleasure from an old chap like him ! The carriage was already there when they arrived. Just like that fellow, who was always late when he was wanted ! Old Jolyon went in for a minute to say good-bye. The little dark hall of the flat was impregnated with a disagreeable odour of patchouli, and on a bench against the wall—its only furniture—he saw a figure sitting. He heard Irene say softly : “ Just one minute.” In the little drawing-room when the door was shut, he asked gravely : “ One of your *protégées* ? ”

“ Yes. Now, thanks to you, I can do something for her.”

He stood, staring, and stroking that chin whose strength had frightened so many in its time. The idea of her thus actually in contact with this outcast, grieved and frightened him. What could she do for them ? Nothing. Only soil and make trouble for herself, perhaps. And he said : “ Take care, my dear ! The world puts the worst construction on everything.”

“ I know that.”

He was abashed by her quiet smile. “ Well then—Sunday,” he murmured : “ Good-bye.”

She put her cheek forward for him to kiss.

“ Good-bye,” he said again ; “ take care of yourself.” And he went out, not looking towards the figure on the bench. He drove home by way of Hammersmith, that he might stop at a place he knew of and tell them to send her in two dozen of their best Burgundy. She must want picking-up sometimes ! Only in Richmond Park did he remember that he had gone up to order himself some boots, and was surprised that he could have had so paltry an idea.

III

THE little spirits of the past which throng an old man's days had never pushed their faces up to his so seldom as in the seventy hours elapsing before Sunday came. The spirit of the future, with the charm of the unknown, put up her lips instead. Old Jolyon was not restless now, and paid no visits to the log, because she was *coming to lunch*. There is wonderful finality about a meal ; it removes a world of doubts, for no one misses meals except for reasons beyond control. He played many games with Holly on the lawn, pitching them up to her who was batting so as to be ready to bowl to Jolly in the holidays. For she was not a Forsyte, but Jolly was—and Forsytes always bat, until they have resigned and reached the age of eighty-four. The dog Balthasar, in attendance, lay on the ball as often as he could, and the page-boy fielded, with a face which was like the harvest moon. And because the time was getting shorter, each day was longer and more golden than the last. On Friday night he took a liver pill, his side hurt him rather, and though it was not the liver side, there is no remedy like that. Anyone telling him that he had found a new excitement in life and that excitement was not good for him, would have been met by one of those steady and rather defiant looks of his deep-set iron-grey eyes, which seemed to say : ' I know my own business best.' He always had and always would.

On Sunday morning, when Holly had gone with her governess to church, he visited the strawberry beds. There, accompanied by the dog Balthasar, he examined the plants narrowly and succeeded in finding at least two dozen berries which were really ripe. Stooping was

not good for him, and he became very dizzy and red in the forehead. Having placed the strawberries in a dish on the dining-table, he washed his hands and bathed his forehead with eau de Cologne. There, before the mirror, it occurred to him that he was thinner. What a 'threadpaper' he had been when he was young ! It was nice to be slim—he could not bear a fat chap ; and yet perhaps his cheeks were *too* thin ! She was to arrive by train at half-past twelve and walk up, entering from the road past Drage's farm at the far end of the coppice. And, having looked into June's room to see that there was hot water ready, he set forth to meet her, leisurely, for his heart was beating. The air smelled sweet, larks sang, and the Grand Stand at Epsom was visible. A perfect day ! On just such a one, no doubt, five years ago, Soames had brought young Bosinney down with him to look at the site before they began to build. It was Bosinney who had pitched on the exact spot for the house—as June had often told him. In these days he was thinking much about that young fellow, as if his spirit were really haunting the field of his last work, on the chance of seeing—her. Bosinney—the one man who had possessed her heart, to whom she had given her whole self with rapture ! At his age one could not, of course, imagine such things, but there stirred in him a queer vague aching—as it were the ghost of an impersonal jealousy ; and a feeling too, more generous, of pity for that love so early lost. All over in a few poor months ! Well, well ! He looked at his watch before entering the coppice—only a quarter past, twenty-five minutes to wait ! And then, turning the corner of the path, he saw her exactly where he had seen her the first time, on the log ; and realised that

she must have come by the earlier train to sit there alone for a couple of hours at least. Two hours of her society—missed! What memory could make that log so dear to her? His face showed what he was thinking, for she said at once:

"Forgive me, Uncle Jolyon; it was here that I first knew."

"Yes, yes; there it is for you whenever you like. You're looking a little Londony; you're giving too many lessons."

That she should have to give lessons worried him. Lessons to a parcel of young girls thumping out scales with their thick fingers!

"Where do you go to give them?" he asked.

"They're mostly Jewish families, luckily."

Old Jolyon stared; to all Forsytes Jews seem strange, and doubtful.

"They love music, and they're very kind."

"They had better be, by George!" He took her arm—his side always hurt him a little going uphill—and said:

"Did you ever see anything like those buttercups? They came like that in a night."

Her eyes seemed really to fly over the field, like bees after the flowers and the honey. "I wanted you to see them—wouldn't let them turn the cows in yet." Then, remembering that she had come to talk about Bosinney, he pointed to the clock-tower over the stables:

"I expect *he* wouldn't have let me put that there—had no notion of time, if I remember."

But, pressing his arm to her, she talked of flowers instead, and he knew it was done that he might not feel *she* came because of her dead lover.

"The best flower I can show you," he said, with a sort of triumph, "is my little sweet. She'll be back from Church directly. There's something about her which reminds me a little of you," and it did not seem to him peculiar that he had put it thus, instead of saying: 'There's something about you which reminds me a little of her.' Ah! And here she was!

Holly, followed closely by her elderly French governess, whose digestion had been ruined twenty-two years ago in the siege of Strasburg, came rushing towards them from under the oak tree. She stopped about a dozen yards away, to pat Balthasar and pretend that this was all she had in her mind. Old Jolyon who knew better, said:

"Well, my darling, here's the lady in grey I promised you."

Holly raised herself and looked up. He watched the two of them with a twinkle, Irene smiling, Holly beginning with grave inquiry, passing to a shy smile too, and then to something deeper. She had a sense of beauty, that child—knew what was what! He enjoyed the sight of the kiss between them.

"Mrs. Heron, Mam'zelle Beauce. Well, Mam'zelle—good sermon?"

For, now that he had not much more time before him, the only part of the service connected with this world absorbed what interest in church remained to him. Mam'zelle Beauce stretched out a spidery hand clad in a black kid glove—she had been in the best families—and the rather sad eyes of her lean yellowish face seemed to ask: "Are you well-brrred?" Whenever Holly or Jolly did anything displeasing to her—a not uncommon occurrence—she would say to them: "The little Tayleurs never did that—they were such well-brrred

little children." Jolly hated the little Tayleurs; Holly wondered dreadfully how it was she fell so short of them. 'A thin rum little soul,' old Jolyon thought her—Mam'zelle Beauce.

Luncheon was a successful meal, the mushrooms which he himself had picked in the mushroom house, his chosen strawberries, and another bottle of the Steinberg cabinet filled him with a certain aromatic spirituality, and a conviction that he would have a touch of eczema to-morrow. After lunch they sat under the oak tree drinking Turkish coffee. It was no matter of grief to him when Mademoiselle Beauce withdrew to write her Sunday letter to her sister, whose future had been endangered in the past by swallowing a pin—an event held up daily in warning to the children to eat slowly and digest what they had eaten. At the foot of the bank, on a carriage rug, Holly and the dog Balthasar teased and loved each other, and in the shade old Jolyon with his legs crossed and his cigar luxuriously savoured, gazed at Irene sitting in the swing. A light, vaguely swaying, grey figure with a fleck of sunlight here and there upon it, lips just opened, eyes dark and soft under lids a little drooped. She looked content; surely it did her good to come and see him! The selfishness of age had not set its proper grip on him, for he could still feel pleasure in the pleasure of others, realising that what he wanted, though much, was not quite all that mattered.

"It's quiet here," he said; "you mustn't come down if you find it dull. But it's a pleasure to see you. My little sweet's is the only face which gives me any pleasure, except yours."

From her smile he knew that she was not beyond liking to be appreciated, and this reassured him.

"That's not humbug," he said. "I never told a woman I admired her when I didn't. In fact I don't know when I've told a woman I admired her, except my wife in the old days; and wives are funny." He was silent, but resumed abruptly:

"She used to expect me to say it more often than I felt it, and there we were." Her face looked mysteriously troubled, and, afraid that he had said something painful, he hurried on:

"When my little sweet marries, I hope she'll find someone who knows what women feel. I shan't be here to see it, but there's too much topsy-turvydom in marriage; I don't want her to pitch up against that." And, aware that he had made bad worse, he added: "That dog *will* scratch."

A silence followed. Of what was she thinking, this pretty creature whose life was spoiled; who had done with love, and yet was made for love? Some day when he was gone, perhaps, she would find another mate—not so disorderly as that young fellow who had got himself run over. Ah! but her husband?

"Does Soames never trouble you?" he asked.

She shook her head. Her face had closed up suddenly. For all her softness there was something irreconcilable about her. And a glimpse of light on the inexorable nature of sex antipathies strayed into a brain which, belonging to early Victorian civilisation—so much older than this of his old age—had never thought about such primitive things.

"That's a comfort," he said. "You can see the Grand Stand to-day. Shall we take a turn round?"

Through the flower and fruit garden, against whose high outer walls peach trees and nectarines were trained to the sun, through the stables, the vinery, the

mushroom house, the asparagus beds, the rosery, the summer-house, he conducted her—even into the kitchen garden to see the tiny green peas which Holly loved to scoop out of their pods with her finger, and lick up from the palm of her little brown hand. Many delightful things he showed her, while Holly and the dog Balthasar danced ahead, or came to them at intervals for attention. It was one of the happiest afternoons he had ever spent, but it tired him and he was glad to sit down in the music room and let her give him tea. A special little friend of Holly's had come in—a fair child with short hair like a boy's. And the two sported in the distance, under the stairs, on the stairs, and up in the gallery. Old Jolyon begged for Chopin. She played studies, mazurkas, waltzes, till the two children, creeping near, stood at the foot of the piano—their dark and golden heads bent forward, listening. Old Jolyon watched.

“Let's see you dance, you two!”

Shyly, with a false start, they began. Bobbing and circling, earnest, not very adroit, they went past and past his chair to the strains of that waltz. He watched them and the face of her who was playing turned smiling towards those little dancers, thinking: ‘Sweetest picture I've seen for ages.’ A voice said:

“Hollée! *Mais enfin—qu'est-ce que tu fais la—danser, le dimanche! Viens, donc!*”

But the children came close to old Jolyon, knowing that he would save them, and gazed into a face which was decidedly ‘caught out.’

“Better the day, better the deed, Mam'zelle. It's all my doing. Trot along, chicks, and have your tea.”

And, when they were gone, followed by the dog Balthazar who took every meal, he looked at Irene with a twinkle and said :

" Well, there we are ! Aren't they sweet ? Have you any little ones among your pupils ? "

" Yes, three—two of them darlings."

" Pretty ? "

" Lovely ! "

Old Jolyon sighed ; he had an insatiable appetite for the very young. " My little sweet," he said, " is devoted to music ; she'll be a musician some day. You wouldn't give me your opinion of her playing, I suppose ? "

" Of course I will."

" You wouldn't like—— " but he stifled the words 'to give her lessons.' The idea that she gave lessons was unpleasant to him ; yet it would mean that he would see her regularly. She left the piano and came over to his chair.

" I would like, very much ; but there is—June. When are they coming back ? "

Old Jolyon frowned. " Not till the middle of next month. What does that matter ? "

" You said June had forgiven me ; but she could never forget, Uncle Jolyon."

Forget ! She *must* forget, if he wanted her to.

But as if answering, Irene shook her head. " You know she couldn't ; one doesn't forget."

Always that wretched past ! And he said with a sort of vexed finality :

" Well, we shall see."

He talked to her an hour or more, of the children, and a hundred little things, till the carriage came round to take her home. And when she had gone he

went back to his chair, and sat there smoothing his face and chin, dreaming over the day.

That evening after dinner he went to his study and took a sheet of paper. He stayed for some minutes without writing, then rose and stood under the masterpiece 'Dutch Fishing Boats at Sunset.' He was not thinking of that picture, but of his life. He was going to leave her something in his Will; nothing could so have stirred the stilly deeps of thought and memory. He was going to leave her a portion of his wealth, of his aspirations, deeds, qualities, work—all that had made that wealth; going to leave her, too, a part of all he had missed in life, by his sane and steady pursuit of it. Ah! What had he missed? 'Dutch Fishing Boats' responded blankly; he crossed to the French window, and drawing the curtain aside, opened it. A wind had got up, and one of last year's oak leaves which had somehow survived the gardeners' brooms, was dragging itself with a tiny clicking rustle along the stone terrace in the twilight. Except for that it was very quiet out there, and he could smell the heliotrope watered not long since. A bat went by. A bird uttered its last 'cheep.' And right above the oak tree the first star shone. Faust, in the opera, had bartered his soul for some fresh years of youth. Morbid notion! No such bargain was possible, that was the *real* tragedy! No making oneself new again for love or life or anything. Nothing left to do but enjoy beauty from afar off while you could, and leave it something in your Will. But how much? And, as if he could not make that calculation looking out into the mild freedom of the country night, he turned back and went up to the chimney-piece. There were his pet bronzes—a Cleopatra with the asp at her breast; a Socrates; a greyhound

playing with her puppy; a strong man reining in some horses. 'They last!' he thought, and a pang went through his heart. They had a thousand years of life before them!

'How much?' Well! enough at all events to save her getting old before her time, to keep the lines out of her face as long as possible, and grey from soiling that bright hair. He might live another five years. She would be well over thirty by then. 'How much?' She had none of his blood in her! In loyalty to the tenor of his life for forty years and more, ever since he married and founded that mysterious thing, a family, came this warning thought—None of his blood, no right to anything! It was a luxury then, this notion. An extravagance, a petting of an old man's whim, one of those things done in dotage. His real future was vested in those who had his blood, in whom he would live on when he was gone. He turned away from the bronzes and stood looking at the old green leather chair in which he had sat and smoked so many hundreds of cigars. And suddenly he seemed to see her sitting there in her grey dress, fragrant, soft, dark-eyed, graceful, looking up at him. Why! She cared nothing for him, really; all she cared for was that lost lover of hers. But she was there, whether she would or no, giving him pleasure with her beauty and grace. One had no right to inflict an old man's company, no right to ask her down to play to him and let him look at her—for no reward! Pleasure must be paid for in this world. 'How much?' After all, there was plenty; his son and his three grandchildren would never miss that little lump. He had made it himself, nearly every penny; he could leave it where he liked, allow himself this little pleasure. He went

back to the bureau. 'Well, I'm going to,' he thought, 'let them think what they like. I'm going to!' And he sat down.

'How much?' Ten thousand, twenty thousand—how much? If only with his money he could buy one year, one month of youth. And startled by that thought, he wrote quickly:

"DEAR HERRING,—Draw me a codicil to this effect: 'I leave to my niece Irene Forsyte, born Irene Heron, by which name she now goes, fifteen thousand pounds free of legacy duty.'

"Yours faithfully,

"JOLYON FORSYTE."

When he had sealed and stamped the envelope, he went back to the window and drew in a long breath. It was dark, but many stars shone now.

IV

HE woke at half-past two, an hour which long experience had taught him brings panic intensity to all awkward thoughts. Experience had also taught him that a further waking at the proper hour of eight showed the folly of such panic. On this particular morning the thought which gathered rapid momentum was that if he became ill, at his age not improbable, he would not see her. From this it was but a step to realisation that he would be cut off, too, when his son and June returned from Spain. How could he justify desire for the company of one who had stolen—early morning does not mince words—June's lover? That lover was dead; but June was a stubborn little thing; warm-hearted, but stubborn as wood, and—quite true—not one who forgot! By the middle

of next month they would be back. He had barely five weeks left to enjoy the new interest which had come into what remained of his life. Darkness showed up to him absurdly clear the nature of his feeling. Admiration for beauty—a craving to see that which delighted his eyes. Preposterous, at his age! And yet—what other reason was there for asking June to undergo such painful reminder, and how prevent his son and his son's wife from thinking him very queer? He would be reduced to sneaking up to London, which tired him; and the least indisposition would cut him off even from that. He lay with eyes open, setting his jaw against the prospect, and calling himself an old fool, while his heart beat loudly, and then seemed to stop beating altogether. He had seen the dawn lighting the window chinks, heard the birds chirp and twitter, and the cocks crow, before he fell asleep again, and awoke tired but sane. Five weeks before he need bother, at his age an eternity! But that early morning panic had left its mark, had slightly fevered the will of one who had always had his own way. He would see her as often as he wished! Why not go up to town and make that codicil at his solicitor's, instead of writing about it; she might like to go to the opera! But, by train, for he would not have that fat chap Beacon grinning behind his back. Servants were such fools; and, as likely as not, they had known all the past history of Irene and young Bosinney—servants knew everything, and suspected the rest. He wrote to her that morning:

“MY DEAR IRENE,—I have to be up in town to-morrow. If you would like to have a look in at the opera, come and dine with me quietly . . .”

But where? It was decades since he had dined

anywhere in London save at his Club or at a private house. Ah! that new-fangled place close to Covent Garden . . .

"Let me have a line to-morrow morning to the Piedmont Hotel whether to expect you there at 7 o'clock.

"Yours affectionately,

"JOLYON FORSYTE."

She would understand that he just wanted to give her a little pleasure; for the idea that she should guess he had this itch to see her was instinctively unpleasant to him; it was not seemly that one so old should go out of his way to see beauty, especially in a woman.

The journey next day, short though it was, and the visit to his lawyer's, tired him. It was hot too, and after dressing for dinner he lay down on the sofa in his bedroom to rest a little. He must have had a sort of fainting fit, for he came to himself feeling very queer; and with some difficulty rose and rang the bell. Why! it was past seven! And there he was, and she would be waiting. But suddenly the dizziness came on again, and he was obliged to relapse on the sofa. He heard the maid's voice say:

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Yes, come here"; he could not see her clearly, for the cloud in front of his eyes. "I'm not well, I want some *sal volatile*."

"Yes, sir." Her voice sounded frightened.

Old Jolyon made an effort.

"Don't go. Take this message to my niece—a lady waiting in the hall—a lady in grey. Say Mr. Forsyte is not well—the heat. He is very sorry; if he is not down directly, she is not to wait dinner."

When she was gone, he thought feebly: 'Why did

I say a lady in grey—she may be in anything. Sal volatile!’ He did not go off again, yet was not conscious of how Irene came to be standing beside him, holding smelling salts to his nose, and pushing a pillow up behind his head. He heard her say anxiously: “Dear Uncle Jolyon, what is it?” was dimly conscious of the soft pressure of her lips on his hand; then drew in a long breath of smelling salts, suddenly discovered strength in them, and sneezed.

“Ha!” he said: “it’s nothing. How did you get here? Go down and dine—the tickets are on the dressing-table. I shall be all right in a minute.”

He felt her cool hand on his forehead, smelled violets, and sat divided between a sort of pleasure and a determination to be all right.

“Why! You *are* in grey!” he said: “Help me up.” Once on his feet he gave himself a shake.

“What business had I to go off like that!” And he moved very slowly to the glass. What a cadaverous chap! Her voice, behind him, murmured:

“You mustn’t come down, Uncle; you must rest.”

“Fiddlesticks! A glass of champagne ’ll soon set me to rights. I can’t have you missing the opera.”

But the journey down the corridor was troublesome. What carpets they had in these new-fangled places, so thick that you tripped up in them at every step! In the lift he noticed how concerned she looked, and said with the ghost of a twinkle:

“I’m a pretty host.”

When the lift stopped he had to hold firmly to the seat to prevent it’s slipping under him; but after soup and a glass of champagne he felt much better, and began to enjoy an infirmity which had brought such solicitude into her manner towards him.

"I should have liked you for a daughter," he said suddenly; and watching the smile in her eyes, went on:

"You mustn't get wrapped up in the past at your time of life; plenty of that when you get to my age. That's a nice dress—I like the style."

"I made it myself."

Ah! A woman who could make herself a pretty frock had not lost her interest in life.

"Make hay while the sun shines," he said; "and drink that up. I want to see some colour in your cheeks. We mustn't waste life; it doesn't do. There's a new Marguerite to-night; let's hope she won't be fat. And Mephisto—anything more dreadful than a fat chap playing the Devil I can't imagine."

But they did not go to the opera after all, for in getting up from dinner the dizziness came over him again, and she insisted on his staying quiet and going to bed early. When he parted from her at the door of the hotel, having paid the cabman to drive her to Chelsea, he sat down again for a moment to enjoy the memory of her words: 'You *are* such a darling to me, Uncle Jolyon!' Why! Who wouldn't be! He would have liked to stay up another day and take her to the Zoo, but two days running of him would bore her to death! No, he must wait till next Sunday; she had promised to come then. They would settle those lessons for Holly, if only for a month. It would be something. That little Mam'zelle Beauce wouldn't like it, but she would have to lump it. And crushing his old opera hat against his chest, he sought the lift.

He drove to Waterloo next morning, struggling with a desire to say: "Drive me to Chelsea." But his sense of proportion was too strong. Besides, he still

felt shaky, and did not want to risk another aberration like that of last night, away from home. Holly, too, was expecting him, and what he had in his bag for her. Not that there was any cupboard love in his little sweet—she was a bundle of affection. Then, with the rather bitter cynicism of the old, he wondered for a second whether it was not cupboard love which made Irene put up with him. No, she was not that sort either. She had, if anything, too little notion of how to butter her bread, no sense of property, poor thing ! Besides, he had not breathed a word about that codicil, nor should he—sufficient unto the day was the good thereof.

In the victoria which met him at the station Holly was restraining the dog Balthasar, and their caresses made 'jubey' his drive home. All the rest of that fine hot day and most of the next he was content and peaceful, reposing in the shade, while the long lingering sunshine showered gold on the lawns and the flowers. But on Thursday evening at his lonely dinner he began to count the hours ; sixty-five till he would go down to meet her again in the little coppice, and walk up through the fields at her side. He had intended to consult the doctor about his fainting fit, but the fellow would be sure to insist on quiet, no excitement and all that ; and he did not mean to be tied by the leg, did not want to be told of an infirmity—if there were one, could not afford to hear it at his time of life, now that this new interest had come. And he carefully avoided making any mention of it in a letter to his son. It would only bring them back with a run ! How far this silence was due to consideration for their pleasure, how far to regard for his own, he did not pause to consider.

That night in his study he had just finished his cigar and was dozing off, when he heard the rustle of a gown, and was conscious of a scent of violets. Opening his eyes he saw her, dressed in grey, standing by the fireplace, holding out her arms. The odd thing was that, though those arms seemed to hold nothing, they were curved as if round someone's neck, and her own neck was bent back, her lips open, her eyes closed. She vanished at once, and there were the mantelpiece and his bronzes. But those bronzes and the mantelpiece had not been there when she was, only the fireplace and the wall! Shaken and troubled, he got up. 'I must take medicine,' he thought; 'I can't be well.' His heart beat too fast, he had an asthmatic feeling in the chest; and going to the window, he opened it to get some air. A dog was barking far away, one of the dogs at Drage's farm no doubt, beyond the coppice. A beautiful still night, but dark. 'I dropped off,' he mused, 'that's it! And yet I'll swear my eyes were open!' A sound like a sigh seemed to answer.

"What's that?" he said sharply, "who's there?"

Putting his hand to his side to still the beating in his heart, he stepped out on to the terrace. Something soft scurried by in the dark. "Shoo!" It was that great grey cat. 'Young Bosinney was like a great cat!' he thought. 'It was him in there, that she—that she was—— He's got her still!' He walked to the edge of the terrace, and looked down into the darkness; he could just see the powdering of the daisies on the unmown lawn. Here to-day and gone to-morrow! And there came the moon, who saw all, young and old, alive and dead, and didn't care a dump! His own turn soon. For a single day of youth he would give what was left! And he turned again towards

the house. He could see the windows of the night nursery up there. His little sweet would be asleep. 'Hope that dog won't wake her!' he thought. 'What is it makes us love, and makes us die! I must go to bed.'

And across the terrace stones, growing grey in the moonlight, he passed back within.

V

How should an old man live his days if not in dreaming of his well-spent past? In that, at all events, there is no agitating warmth, only pale winter sunshine. The shell can withstand the gentle beating of the dynamos of memory. The present he should distrust; the future shun. From beneath thick shade he should watch the sunlight creeping at his toes. If there be sun of summer, let him not go out into it, mistaking it for the Indian-summer sun! Thus peradventure he shall decline softly, slowly, imperceptibly, until impatient Nature clutches his wind-pipe and he gasps away to death some early morning before the world is aired, and they put on his tombstone: 'In the fulness of years!' Yea! If he preserve his principles in perfect order, a Forsyte may live on long after he is dead:

Old Jolyon was conscious of all this, and yet there was in him that which transcended Forsytism. For it is written that a Forsyte shall not love beauty more than reason; nor his own way more than his own health. And something beat within him in these days that with each throb fretted at the thinning shell. His sagacity knew this, but it knew too that he could not stop that beating, nor would if he could. And yet, if you had told him he was living on his capital, he

would have stared you down. No, no ; a man did not live on his capital ; it was not done ! The shibboleths of the past are ever more real than the actualities of the present. And he, to whom living on one's capital had always been anathema, could not have borne to have applied so gross a phrase to his own case. Pleasure is healthful ; beauty good to see ; to live again in the youth of the young—and what else on earth was he doing !

Methodically, as had been the way of his whole life, he now arranged his time. On Tuesdays he journeyed up to town by train ; Irene came and dined with him, and they went to the opera. On Thursdays he drove to town, and, putting that fat chap and his horses up, met her in Kensington Gardens, picking up the carriage after he had left her, and driving home again in time for dinner. He threw out the casual formula that he had business in London on those two days. On Wednesdays and Saturdays she came down to give Holly music lessons. The greater the pleasure he took in her society, the more scrupulously fastidious he became, just a matter-of-fact and friendly uncle. Not even in feeling, really, was he more—for, after all, there was his age. And yet, if she were late he fidgeted himself to death. If she missed coming, which happened twice, his eyes grew sad as an old dog's, and he failed to sleep.

And so a month went by—a month of summer in the fields, and in his heart, with summer's heat and the fatigue thereof. Who could have believed a few weeks back that he would have looked forward to his son's and his grand-daughter's return with something like dread ! There was such delicious freedom, such recovery of that independence a man enjoys before

he founds a family, about these weeks of lovely weather, and this new companionship with one who demanded nothing, and remained always a little unknown, retaining the fascination of mystery. It was like a draught of wine to him who has been drinking water for so long that he has almost forgotten the stir wine brings to his blood, the narcotic to his brain. The flowers were coloured brighter, scents and music and the sunlight had a living value—were no longer mere reminders of past enjoyment. There was something now to live for which stirred him continually to anticipation. He lived in that, not in retrospection; the difference is considerable to any so old as he. The pleasures of the table, never of much consequence to one naturally abstemious, had lost all value. He ate little, without knowing what he ate; and every day grew thinner and more worn to look at. He was again a 'threadpaper'; and to this thinned form his massive forehead, with hollows at the temples, gave more dignity than ever. He was very well aware that he ought to see the doctor, but liberty was too sweet. He could not afford to pet his frequent shortness of breath and the pain in his side at the expense of liberty. Return to the vegetable existence he had led among the agricultural journals with the life-size mangold wurzels, before this new attraction came into his life—no! He exceeded his allowance of cigars. Two a day had always been his rule. Now he smoked three and sometimes four—a man will when he is filled with the creative spirit. But very often he thought: 'I must give up smoking, and coffee; I must give up rattling up to town.' But he did not; there was no one in any sort of authority to notice him, and this was a priceless boon. The servants perhaps

wondered, but they were, naturally, dumb. Mam'zelle Beauce was too concerned with her own digestion, and too 'well-brrred' to make personal allusions. Holly had not as yet an eye for the relative appearance of him who was her plaything and her god. It was left for Irene herself to beg him to eat more, to rest in the hot part of the day, to take a tonic, and so forth. But she did not tell him that she was the cause of his thinness—for one cannot see the havoc oneself is working. A man of eighty-four has no passions, but the Beauty which produces passion works on in the old way, till death closes the eyes which crave the sight of Her.

On the first day of the second week in July he received a letter from his son in Paris to say that they would all be back on Friday. This had always been more sure than Fate; but, with the pathetic providence given to the old, that they may endure to the end, he had never quite admitted it. Now he did, and something would have to be done. He had ceased to be able to imagine life without this new interest, but, that which is not imagined sometimes exists, as the English are perpetually finding to their cost. He sat in his old leather chair, doubling up the letter, and mumbling with his lips the end of an unlighted cigar. After to-morrow his Tuesday expeditions to town would have to be abandoned. He could still drive up, perhaps, once a week, on the pretext of seeing his man of business. But even that would be dependent on his health, for now they would begin to fuss about him. The lessons! The lessons must go on! She must swallow down her scruples, and June must put her feelings in her pocket. She had done so once, on the day after the news of Bosinney's death; what she had done then, she could surely do again now. Four years

since that injury was inflicted on her—not Christian to keep the memory of old sores alive. June's will was strong, but his was stronger, for his sands were running out. Irene was soft, surely she would do this for him, subdue her natural shrinking, sooner than give him pain ! The lessons must continue ; for if they did, he was secure. And lighting his cigar at last, he began trying to shape out how to put it to them all, and explain this strange intimacy ; how to veil and wrap it away from the naked truth—that he could not bear to be deprived of the sight of beauty. Ah ! Holly ! Holly was fond of her, Holly liked her lessons. She would save him—his little sweet ! And with that happy thought he became serene, and wondered what he had been worrying about so fearfully. He must not worry, it left him always curiously weak, and as if but half present in his own body.

That evening after dinner he had a return of the dizziness, though he did not faint. He would not ring the bell, because he knew it would mean a fuss, and make his going up on the morrow more conspicuous. When one grew old, the whole world was in conspiracy to limit freedom, and for what reason ?—just to keep the breath in him a little longer. He did not want it at such cost. Only the dog Balthasar saw his lonely recovery from that weakness ; anxiously watched him go to the sideboard and drink some brandy, instead of giving him a biscuit. When at last he felt able to tackle the stairs he went up to bed. And, though still shaky next morning, the thought of the evening sustained and strengthened him. It was always such a pleasure to give her a good dinner—he suspected her of under-eating when she was alone ; and, at the opera to watch her eyes glow and brighten, the unconscious

smiling of her lips. She hadn't much pleasure, and this was the last time he would be able to give her that treat. But when he was packing his bag he caught himself wishing he had not the fatigue of dressing for dinner before him, and the exertion, too, of telling her about June's return.

The opera that evening was 'Carmen,' and he chose the last *entr'acte* to break the news, instinctively putting it off till the latest moment. She took it quietly, queerly; in fact, he did not know how she had taken it before the wayward music lifted up again and silence became necessary. The mask was down over her face, that mask behind which so much went on that he could not see. She wanted time to think it over, no doubt! He would not press her, for she would be coming to give her lesson to-morrow afternoon, and he should see her then when she had got used to the idea. In the cab he talked only of the Carmen; he had seen better in the old days, but this one was not bad at all. When he took her hand to say good-night, she bent quickly forward and kissed his forehead.

"Good-bye, dear Uncle Jolyon, you have been so sweet to me."

"To-morrow then," he said. "Good-night. Sleep well." She echoed softly: "Sleep well!" and in the cab window, already moving away, he saw her face screwed round towards him, and her hand put out in a gesture which seemed to linger.

He sought his room slowly. They never gave him the same, and he could not get used to these 'spick-and-span' bedrooms with new furniture and grey-green carpets sprinkled all over with pink roses. He was wakeful and that wretched Habanera kept throbbing in his head. His French had never been equal

to its words, but its sense he knew, if it had any sense, a gipsy thing—wild and unaccountable. Well, there *was* in life something which upset all your care and plans—something which made men and women dance to its pipes. And he lay staring from deep-sunk eyes into the darkness where the unaccountable held sway. You thought you had hold of life, but it slipped away behind you, took you by the scruff of the neck, forced you here and forced you there, and then, likely as not, squeezed life out of you ! It took the very stars like that, he shouldn't wonder, rubbed their noses together and flung them apart ; it had never done playing its tricks. Five million people in this great blunderbuss of a town, and all of them at the mercy of that Life-Force, like a lot of little dried peas hopping about on a board when you struck your fist on it. Ah, well ! Himself would not hop much longer—a good long sleep would do him good !

How hot it was up here !—how noisy ! His forehead burned ; she had kissed it just where he always worried ; just there—as if she had known the very place and wanted to kiss it all away for him. But, instead, her lips left a patch of grievous uneasiness. She had never spoken in quite that voice, had never before made that lingering gesture, or looked back at him as she drove away. He got out of bed and pulled the curtains aside ; his room faced down over the river. There was little air, but the sight of that breadth of water flowing by, calm, eternal, soothed him. 'The great thing,' he thought, 'is not to make myself a nuisance. I'll think of my little sweet, and go to sleep.' But it was long before the heat and throbbing of the London night died out into the short slumber of the summer morning. And old Jolyon had but forty winks.

When he reached home next day he went out to the flower garden, and with the help of Holly, who was very delicate with flowers, gathered a great bunch of carnations. They were, he told her, for 'the lady in grey'—a name still bandied between them; and he put them in a bowl in his study where he meant to tackle Irene the moment she came, on the subject of June and future lessons. Their fragrance and colour would help. After lunch he lay down, for he felt very tired, and the carriage would not bring her from the station till four o'clock. But as the hour approached he grew restless, and sought the schoolroom, which overlooked the drive. The sunblinds were down, and Holly was there with Mademoiselle Beauce, sheltered from the heat of a stifling July day, attending to their silkworms. Old Jolyon had a natural antipathy to these methodical creatures, whose heads and colour reminded him of elephants; who nibbled such quantities of holes in nice green leaves; and smelled, as he thought, horrid. He sat down on a chintz-covered window-seat whence he could see the drive, and get what air there was; and the dog Balthasar who appreciated chintz on hot days, jumped up beside him. Over the cottage piano a violet dustsheet, faded almost to grey, was spread, and on it the first lavender, whose scent filled the room. In spite of the coolness here, perhaps because of that coolness, the beat of life vehemently impressed his ebbcd-down senses. Each sunbeam which came through the chinks had annoying brilliance; that dog smelled very strong; the lavender perfume was overpowering; those silkworms heaving up their grey-green backs seemed horribly alive; and Holly's dark head bent over them had a wonderfully silky sheen. A marvellous, cruelly strong thing was life when you were

old and weak ; it seemed to mock you with its multitude of forms and its beating vitality. He had never, till those last few weeks, had this curious feeling of being with one half of him eagerly borne along in the stream of life, and with the other half left on the bank, watching that helpless progress. Only when Irene was with him did he lose this double consciousness.

Holly turned her head, pointed with her little brown fist to the piano—for to point with a finger was not ‘well-brrred’—and said slyly :

“ Look at the ‘ lady in grey,’ Gran ; isn’t she pretty to-day ? ”

Old Jolyon’s heart gave a flutter, and for a second the room was clouded ; then it cleared, and he said with a twinkle :

“ Who’s been dressing her up ? ”

“ Mam’zelle.”

“ Hollee ! Don’t be foolish ! ”

That prim little Frenchwoman ! She hadn’t yet got over the music lessons being taken away from her. That wouldn’t help. His little sweet was the only friend they had. Well, they were her lessons. And he shouldn’t budge—shouldn’t budge for anything. He stroked the warm wool on Balthasar’s head, and heard Holly say :

“ When mother’s home, there won’t be any changes, will there ? She doesn’t like strangers, you know.”

The child’s words seemed to bring the chilly atmosphere of opposition about old Jolyon, and disclose all the menace to his new-found freedom. Ah ! He would have to resign himself to being an old man at the mercy of care and love, or fight to keep this new and prized companionship ; and to fight tired him to death. But his thin, worn face hardened into resolution, till it

appeared all jaw. This was his house, and his affair ; he should not budge ! He looked at his watch, old and thin like himself ; he had owned it fifty years. Past four already ! And kissing the top of Holly's head in passing, he went down to the hall. He wanted to get hold of her before she went up to give her lesson. At the first sound of wheels he stepped out into the porch, and saw at once that the victoria was empty.

"The train's in, sir ; but the lady 'asn't come."

Old Jolyon gave him a sharp upward look, his eyes seemed to push away that fat chap's curiosity, and defy him to see the bitter disappointment he was feeling.

"Very well," he said, and turned back into the house. He went to his study and sat down, quivering like a leaf. What did this mean ? She might have lost her train, but he knew well enough she hadn't. 'Good-bye, dear Uncle Jolyon.' Why 'Good-bye' and not 'Good-night' ? And that hand of hers lingering in the air. And her kiss. What did it mean ? Vehement alarm and irritation took possession of him. He got up and began to pace the Turkey carpet, between window and wall. She was going to give him up ! He felt it for certain—and he defenceless. An old man wanting to look on beauty ! It was ridiculous ! Age closed his mouth, paralysed his power to fight. He had no right to what was warm and living, no right to anything but memories and sorrow. He could not plead with her ; even an old man has his dignity. Defenceless ! For an hour, lost to bodily fatigue, he paced up and down, past the bowl of carnations he had plucked, which mocked him with its scent. Of all things hard to bear, the prostration of will-power is

hardest, for one who has always had his way. Nature had got him in its net, and like an unhappy fish he turned and swam at the meshes, here and there, found no hole, no breaking point. They brought him tea at five o'clock, and a letter. For a moment hope beat up in him. He cut the envelope with the butter knife, and read :

"DEAREST UNCLE JOLYON,—I can't bear to write anything that may disappoint you, but I was too cowardly to tell you last night. I feel I can't come down and give Holly any more lessons, now that June is coming back. Some things go too deep to be forgotten. It has been such a joy to see you and Holly. Perhaps I shall still see you sometimes when you come up, though I'm sure it's not good for you ; I can see you are tiring yourself too much. I believe you ought to rest quite quietly all this hot weather, and now you have your son and June coming back you will be so happy. Thank you a million times for all your sweetness to me.

" Lovingly your

" IRENE."

So, there it was ! Not good for him to have pleasure and what he chiefly cared about ; to try and put off feeling the inevitable end of all things, the approach of death with its stealthy, rustling footsteps. Not good for him ! Not even she could see how she was his new lease of interest in life, the incarnation of all the beauty he felt slipping from him !

His tea grew cold, his cigar remained unlit ; and up and down he paced, torn between his dignity and his hold on life. Intolerable to be squeezed out slowly, without a say of your own, to live on when your will was in the hands of others bent on weighing you to the

ground with care and love. Intolerable! He would see what telling her the truth would do—the truth that he wanted the sight of her more than just a lingering on. He sat down at his old bureau and took a pen. But he could not write. There was something revolting in having to plead like this; plead that she should warm his eyes with her beauty. It was tantamount to confessing dotage. He simply could not. And instead, he wrote:

“I had hoped that the memory of old sores would not be allowed to stand in the way of what is a pleasure and a profit to me and my little grand-daughter. But old men learn to forego their whims; they are obliged to, even the whim to live must be foregone sooner or later; and perhaps the sooner the better.

“My love to you,

“JOLYON FORSYTE.”

‘Bitter,’ he thought, ‘but I can’t help it. I’m tired.’ He sealed and dropped it into the box for the evening post, and hearing it fall to the bottom, thought: ‘There goes all I’ve looked forward to!’

That evening after dinner which he scarcely touched, after his cigar which he left half-smoked for it made him feel faint, he went very slowly upstairs and stole into the night-nursery. He sat down on the window-seat. A night-light was burning, and he could just see Holly’s face, with one hand underneath the cheek. An early cockchafer buzzed in the Japanese paper with which they had filled the grate, and one of the horses in the stable stamped restlessly. To sleep like that child! He pressed apart two rungs of the venetian blind and looked out. The moon was rising, blood-red. He had never seen so red a moon. The woods and fields out there were dropping to sleep too, in the last glimmer

of the summer light. And beauty, like a spirit, walked. 'I've had a long life,' he thought, 'the best of nearly everything. I'm an ungrateful chap; I've seen a lot of beauty in my time. Poor young Bosinney said I had a sense of beauty. There's a man in the moon to-night!' A moth went by, another, another. 'Ladies in grey!' He closed his eyes. A feeling that he would never open them again beset him; he let it grow, let himself sink; then, with a shiver, dragged the lids up. There was something wrong with him, no doubt, deeply wrong; he would have to have the doctor after all. It didn't much matter now! Into that coppice the moonlight would have crept; there would be shadows, and those shadows would be the only things awake. No birds, beasts, flowers, insects; just the shadows—moving; 'Ladies in grey!' Over that log they would climb; would whisper together. She and Bosinney! Funny thought! And the frogs and little things would whisper too! How the clock ticked, in here! It was all eerie—out there in the light of that red moon; in here with the little steady night-light and the ticking clock and the nurse's dressing-gown hanging from the edge of the screen, tall, like a woman's figure. 'Lady in grey!' And a very odd thought beset him: Did she exist? Had she ever come at all? Or was she but the emanation of all the beauty he had loved and must leave so soon? The violet-grey spirit with the dark eyes and the crown of amber hair, who walks the dawn and the moonlight, and at blue-bell time? What was she, who was she, did she exist? He rose and stood a moment clutching the window-sill, to give him a sense of reality again; then began tiptoeing towards the door. He stopped at the foot of the bed; and Holly, as if conscious of his eyes fixed

on her, stirred, sighed, and curled up closer in defence. He tiptoed on and passed out into the dark passage; reached his room, undressed at once, and stood before a mirror in his night-shirt. What a scarecrow—with temples fallen in, and thin legs! His eyes resisted his own image, and a look of pride came on his face. All was in league to pull him down, even his reflection in the glass, but he was not down—yet! He got into bed, and lay a long time without sleeping, trying to reach resignation, only too well aware that fretting and disappointment were very bad for him.

He woke in the morning so unrefreshed and strengthless that he sent for the doctor. After sounding him, the fellow pulled a face as long as your arm, and ordered him to stay in bed and give up smoking. That was no hardship; there was nothing to get up for, and when he felt ill, tobacco always lost its savour. He spent the morning languidly with the sunblinds down, turning and re-turning *The Times*, not reading much, the dog Balthasar lying beside his bed. With his lunch they brought him a telegram, running thus: 'Your letter received coming down this afternoon will be with you at four-thirty. Irene.'

Coming down! After all! Then she did exist—and he was not deserted. Coming down! A glow ran through his limbs; his cheeks and forehead felt hot. He drank his soup, and pushed the tray-table away, lying very quiet until they had removed lunch and left him alone; but every now and then his eyes twinkled. Coming down! His heart beat fast, and then did not seem to beat at all. At three o'clock he got up and dressed deliberately, noiselessly. Holly and Mam'zelle would be in the schoolroom, and the servants asleep after their dinner, he shouldn't wonder. He opened

his door cautiously, and went downstairs. In the hall the dog Balthasar lay solitary, and, followed by him, old Jolyon passed into his study and out into the burning afternoon. He meant to go down and meet her in the coppice, but felt at once he could not manage that in this heat. He sat down instead under the oak tree by the swing, and the dog Balthasar who also felt the heat, lay down beside him. He sat there smiling. What a revel of bright minutes! What a hum of insects, and cooing of pigeons! It was the quintessence of a summer day. Lovely! And he was happy—happy as a sand-boy, whatever that might be. She was coming; she had not given him up! He had everything in life he wanted—except a little more breath, and less weight—just here! He would see her when she emerged from the fernery come, swaying just a little, a violet-grey figure passing over the daisies and dandelions and ‘soldiers’ on the lawn—the soldiers with their flowery crowns. He would not move, but she would come up to him and say: ‘Dear Uncle Jolyon, I am sorry!’ and sit in the swing and let him look at her and tell her that he had not been very well but was all right now; and that dog would lick her hand. That dog knew his master was fond of her; that dog was a good dog.

It was quite shady under the tree; the sun could not get at him, only make the rest of the world bright so that he could see the Grand Stand at Epsom away out there, very far, and the cows cropping the clover in the field and swishing at the flies with their tails. He smelled the scent of limes, and lavender. Ah! that was why there was such a racket of bees. They were excited—busy, as his heart was busy and excited. Drowsy, too, drowsy and drugged on honey and

happiness; as his heart was drugged and drowsy. Summer—summer—they seemed saying; great bees and little bees, and the flies too!

The stable clock struck four; in half an hour she would be here. He would have just one tiny nap, because he had had so little sleep of late; and then he would be fresh for her, fresh for youth and beauty, coming towards him across the sunlit lawn—lady in grey! And settling back in his chair he closed his eyes. Some thistledown came on what little air there was, and pitched on his moustache more white than itself. He did not know; but his breathing stirred it, caught there. A ray of sunlight struck through and lodged on his boot. A humble-bee alighted and strolled on the crown of his Panama hat. And the delicious surge of slumber reached the brain beneath that hat, and the head swayed forward and rested on his breast. Summer—summer! So went the hum.

The stable clock struck the quarter past. The dog Balthasar stretched and looked up at his master. The thistledown no longer moved. The dog placed his chin over the sunlit foot. It did not stir. The dog withdrew his chin quickly, rose, and leaped on old Jolyon's lap, looked in his face, whined; then, leaping down, sat on his haunches, gazing up. And suddenly he uttered a long, long howl.

But the thistledown was still as death, and the face of his old master.

Summer—summer—summer! The soundless footsteps on the grass!

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